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ABSTRACT

Articles in this theme issue explore gender issues and their connections with classroom life. Research studies, essays, book reviews, and teacher notes deal with gender and education. The articles are: (1) "United Nations Declaration on Elimination of Discrimination of Women"; (2) "In the Classroom: De-institutionalizing Gender Bias" (Jean Ann Hunt); (3) "Stories from the Classroom" (Jaylynne N. Hutchinson); (4) "Gender in the Classroom: Now You See It, Now You Don't" (Jane Roland Martin); (5) "Fireballs in the Night: The Impact of Children's Literature on Gender: Development and Imagination" (Joan Scanlon McMath); (6) "Creating a Kindergarten Community" (Tessa Logan); (7) "Unfolding What It Means To Care: One Girl's Middle School Experience" (Barbara Waxman and Liz Young); (8) "Epitome" (student poetry by Janelle Horton); (9) "A Heavy Burden for Feminist of the Year" (Craig Segal); (10) "Lost Innocence in a Heteronormative World" (Remie Calalang); (11) "Whose Voices Are Heard? Adolescent Mothering and an Ethic of Care" (Julie K. Biddle); (12) "Behind Classroom Doors: A Reflection of My Struggle To Learn" (student reflection by Lora Liddell); (13) "Adolescence, Schooling, and Equality in 'School Girls'" (book review by Nancy Smith); (14) "'A Ground from Which To Soar': Exploring Tillie Olsen's 'Silences' for Educators of Girls and Women" (book review by Janet MacLennan); and (15) "Resources for Gender & Education." (SLD)

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Democracy & Education

The magazine for classroom teachers

STORIES FROM THE CLASSROOM:
Issues of Gender and Education

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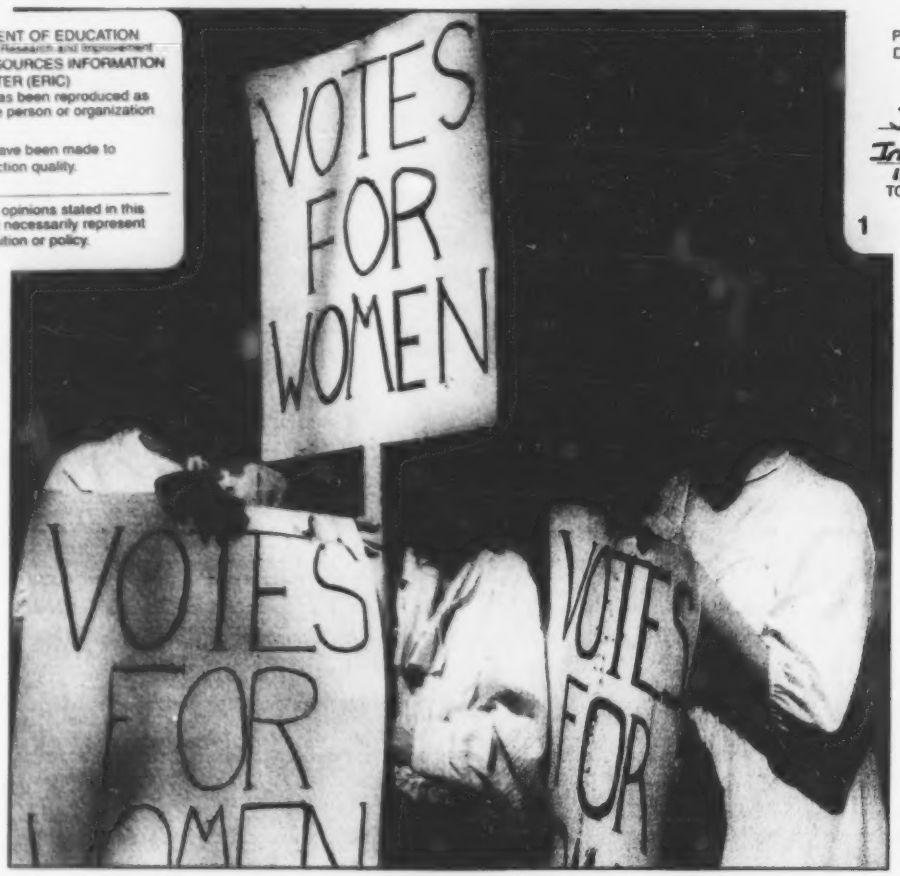

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Statement of Purpose

Democracy & Education, the magazine for classroom teachers, is a journal of the **Institute for Democracy in Education.**

IDE is a partnership of all participants in the educational process — teachers, administrators, parents and students — who believe that democratic school change must come from those at the heart of education.

IDE promotes educational practices that provide students with experiences through which they can develop democratic attitudes and values. Only by living them can students develop the democratic ideals of equality, liberty and community.

IDE works to provide teachers committed to democratic education with a forum for sharing ideas with a support network of people holding similar values, and with opportunities for professional development.

Democracy & Education is the main editorial outlet of **IDE**, which also sponsors conferences and workshops and publishes curricular materials. **Democracy & Education** tries to serve the ideals we value in our classrooms and our lives by providing information, sharing experiences and reviewing resources. For more information or to become a member of the **Institute for Democracy in Education,** please write or call:

The Institute for Democracy in Education
College of Education
McCracken Hall
Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701-2979

(740) 593-4531
Fax (740) 593-0477
E-mail: DEMOCRACY@ohiou.edu

To learn more about IDE, visit our website at
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Cover photo: *Intermediate (5-6th grade) students from River Valley Community School in Athens, Ohio reenacted Women's Suffrage demonstrations as part of a play they created while researching women's history.*

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DEMOCRACY & EDUCATION

EDITOR Jean Ann Hunt, National-Louis University

GUEST EDITOR Jaylynne Hutchinson, Ohio University

COPY EDITOR Jay Boshara

DESIGNER Carolyn King, LunaGraphics

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The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination of Women

The General Assembly,

Considering that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women,

Considering that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts the principle of non-discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including any distinction as to sex. Taking into account the resolutions, declarations, conventions, and recommendations of the United Nations and the specialized agencies designed to eliminate all forms of discrimination and to promote equal rights for men and women,

Concerned that despite the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other instruments of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, and despite the progress made in the matter of equality of rights, there continues to exist considerable discrimination against women,

Considering that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and of society, prevents their participation, on equal terms, with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, and is an obstacle to full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,

Bearing in mind the great contribution made by women to social, political, economic, and cultural life and the part they play in the family and particularly in the rearing of children,

Convinced that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women as well as men in all fields,

Considering that it is necessary to ensure the universal recognition in law and in fact of the principle of equality of men and women,

Solemnly proclaims this Declaration:

Art. 1. Discrimination against women, denying or limiting as it does their equality or rights with men, is fundamentally unjust and constitutes an offence against human dignity.

The Declaration continues with 11 separate Articles, and can be found in the United Nations Yearbook, 1967, along with other UN Declarations of Human Rights.

In the Classroom:

De-institutionalizing Gender Bias

BY JEAN ANN HUNT

Although issues of gender have been part of education from its inception, in recent years they have been brought into the forefront significantly due to the American Association of University Women's study on girls' achievement in U.S. schools. The issues raised in this study are numerous and complex. None of us teach in isolation from the world around us and the messages that our society gives girls boldly continue to support the status quo. Look on billboards, watch a sitcom (my current favorite example is "Two of a Kind" about twin pre-adolescent girls who are keenly interested in boys and acting twice their age), pick up a girl's magazine or stroll the isle of a drug store for examples of how we continue to objectify girls and women. Classroom teachers have a huge responsibility and challenge in combating these messages and creating communities where issues of equity and equality play a vital role in educating our future participants in this democratic society.

A number of years ago as a 2nd/3rd grade teacher, I thought I had established a classroom that did not place children in pre-established gender roles. One sunny afternoon two children came running up to me after lunch time recess demanding to know "Who was better, girls or boys?" As it often happened, I was speechless; filtering through the list of biases I had been taught about girls' and boys' achievements. As I listened to their description of their playground experiences, I quickly remembered what an issue competition between boys and girls had been in my own recess play and schooling. Too often boys and girls

competed against each other in spelling bees and math games. We lined up separately competing for the chance to go to the lunchroom first by being quiet and compliant.

It seems that my two students were beginning to act on society's "tapes" that had been played for them in defining their gender roles. They had been playing an organized game of soccer. The boys wanted to play by themselves and rationalized this by stating that boys are better at sports than girls. Tension grew in the classroom as almost all of the students had something to say about this topic. Seeing that this issue was larger than a simple playground disagreement, I suggested that we try to find an answer to their questions: How come there aren't any baseball players that are girls? Why can't girls play football? How come boys aren't cheerleaders? The classroom was soon brimming with individual stories of when someone beat someone else in a sports activity. My challenge was to help them make sense out of their personal experiences and the lessons they were learning from simply being in a world full of images of women that are largely negative. In addition, I felt it was important that they question the images presented to them about how girls and boys were supposed to be.

We began our study by talking about and defining the word "stereotype." It made sense to start here because in part, the boys' claim of girls not being good in sports was a stereotype. I remember boys on my childhood playground being accused of running or hitting "like a girl." The sting of this barb was denigrating for both boys and girls who heard it. As a teacher the words echoed in my head in chorus with the same phrases my students were using. We talked about what those words meant and how they were used to put down some boys and all girls. We discussed the dangers in making generalizations about a whole group of people. The word stereotype stayed on our bulletin board throughout our study and the students collected examples of all kinds of stereotypes for display. We specifically explored what it meant to be a girl/boy and how stereotypes can sometimes be based on actual happenings and sometimes based on myths/misconceptions and used to prevent people from trying something in which they might be interested. These concepts, which may seem complex and difficult to us as adults, were actually very easy for these 7, 8, and 9 year olds to understand. Each of them had

experienced a time when they were told they could not do something because they were a girl/boy or too young or "not big enough." We were also able to talk about who benefits and who gets hurt when any one of us feels like we can't try something new.

We then turned our attention to the issue of women/men in sports. As I looked for resources to supplement our experiences it was easy to understand why several of my students felt that boys were indeed better than girls at sports. How often are our children exposed to women athletes? When they do see female athletes, in what sports activities are they seen? How are women athletes written about and portrayed by sports commentators? We collected magazine pictures and newspaper articles, looked for events to watch on TV, read several stories of real women athletes, and paid very close attention to what was happening in our own classroom and school.

There were several turning points in our course of study. One came very unexpectedly as we were walking to PE one afternoon. Our single file line came to an abrupt halt as one 3rd grader shouted for everyone to look at the bulletin board we were passing in the hallway. We looked at a very colorful display of athletes from the covers of popular sports magazines. A variety of sports were represented and it was clear from the professional look of the display that the PE teacher had put time and thought into a visual that would encourage students to think about many different sports. "Just look at that!" the 8 year-old exclaimed. "There isn't one girl in all those pictures." On closer examination we discovered she was right. The students immediately wanted to do something to right this injustice. They wrote a wonderful letter to the PE teacher sharing their discovery and asking him to change the display (which he promptly did). They were empowered and the adult's positive response to their call reinforced the idea that a few people can indeed change things!

A second turning point arrived while studying some American history. We were reading a book about Jackie Robinson and his entry into major league baseball as the first African-American player. A group of students started an animated mid-book discussion that distracted the rest of the class. When the rest of us inquired as to the theme of their conversation, they pointed out to us that we had missed the connection between this story and our studying of stereotypes: "People used to say the same stuff about black athletes that they say about women!" It was a marvelously rich "teachable moment," generating thought-provoking ideas about the interconnectedness between racism and sexism.

Finally, the students also began to censor their own stereotypes. Toward the end of our study one young boy in the class who held out that indeed "boys are better," self-censored a remark he was about to make during one of our class meetings. He looked at us wide-eyed and confessed, "Oh no, I almost said a stereotype." He was given a lot of "put-ups" for his insightfulness.

By no means did we resolve all the issues here, nor was that the intent. One of the most important aspects of living and participating in a democracy is learning how to grapple with the complexities of working with issues of equity and equality. Our students need opportunities to listen and debate tough questions in an atmosphere that supports putting the issues on the table and sorting them out. The goal is not to find one definitive answer, but rather to ensure that the process is one that stretches our teachers' and students' thinking and challenges us all to learn from one another.

And of course, I was challenged to continue this work on a daily basis. I had learned to pay attention to the literature I brought into the classroom. Who were the women characters? Did they perpetuate a stereotype or contradict one? Were they multi-layered characters or one-dimensional? I looked at how I was grouping students for various activities, paid better attention to the language I used when talking to students, and watched for the patterns I had developed regarding class participation. Was I calling on boys and girls equally in a class discussion? How did I respond to the girls? the boys? What kinds of interactions were happening between the sexes in our hallways? Was I expecting my girls to act more like the boys as a sure measure of their success, while not valuing the qualities that girls have which might be useful for boys to acquire or nurture to maturity?

I think it is also important that we look at policies and procedures in our schools that may be used to institutionalize gender bias. How does tracking affect the opportunities for our male and female students? What courses are girls and boys discouraged or encouraged to take? What is the make-up of student representation in governance structures? Who is chosen for office and teacher assistants? What kind of post-high school counseling is being offered to all of our students? Such questions can get to the heart of how our institutions deal with gender issues. In short, are we advocating for all of our students?

Jaylynne Hutchinson, guest editor of this issue and new director of IDE, has been committed to helping teachers and students wrestle with the issues of living democracy. In this issue she helps us continue our learning about gender issues and their connections with classroom life. I invite you to share the stories and thoughts you read about here with your colleagues, your family members, and your students. The conversations each of the authors begins here should be carried on in all aspects of our lives in order for democracy to flourish and grow stronger.

Jean Ann Hunt teaches in Interdisciplinary Studies, a progressive Master's program for teachers at National-Louis University in Evanston, Illinois.

Stories from the Classroom:
Issues of Gender and Education

BY JAYLYNNE N. HUTCHINSON

One of my favorite quotes is from the late scientist Carl Sagan who said, "We make the world significant by the courage of our questions and the depth of our answers." As we explore questions of gender and education in this issue, we are not striving for an exhaustive explanation of everything that occurs in the lives of girls in schools. Rather, we have invited voices from a variety of "places" and perspectives so that we may begin to define the issue from the inside-out, rather than from the outside-in. To do this, we will explore stories from the classroom through differences in style, in ages, in voice, in topic, through literature, poetry, essays, teacher talk, parent talk, researcher talk, and girl talk.

A critical aspect of the dialogue on gender as it relates to education is to explore *how we say what we know*. How can we move beyond a singular and unidimensional form of expression of what we know? We must also ask, how do we come to know? Questions that I hope are raised as you read and reflect on the pieces within this journal might include: What kind of knowledge do we gain from the experience of living a life? What does a girl know growing up in a society that is pervaded by denigrating messages of womanhood (some subtle—some not—some controversial—some apparent), while at the same time professing equality and opportunity for all? What role does the school play in helping young people understand these conflicting and confusing messages?

Iris Marion Young defines feminism through the use of two characteristics. First, she writes that "feminism. . .means attention to the effects of institutions, policies, and ideas on women's well-being and opportunities, especially insofar as these wrongly constrain, harm, or disadvantage many if not all women. Entailed by such attention is a commitment to ameliorating such harms and disadvantages." This seems fairly non-controversial. After all, who wouldn't support well-being and opportunity? Young continues with the second defining feature of feminism. She states that it privileges and "draws on women's experiences, or on social and philosophical reflection that takes itself to be from women's perspectives, as resources for developing social descriptions and normative arguments." (Young, 1997) This second aspect brings us back to the inside-out stories of girls' and women's lived lives. Since both of these components make a lot of sense to me, I am surprised to find so many young women hesitant to claim the term "feminist." They tell me it is because it carries the connotation of man-hating or male-bashing; it conjures up no make-up, unshaven armpits, and the lack of femininity. I used to apologize for these aspects and attempt to explain them away, but now I don't worry so much. Instead I see how much more important it is not to fall prey to this mistake of labeling, classifying, dividing and conquering, by saying for example, "I'm a feminist, you're not!" Rather, our questions must go much deeper, and as educators, we must ask ourselves whether or not, consciously or not, we are complicit with society's and school's hidden curriculum as it relates to limiting opportunities for the growth and well-being of girls.

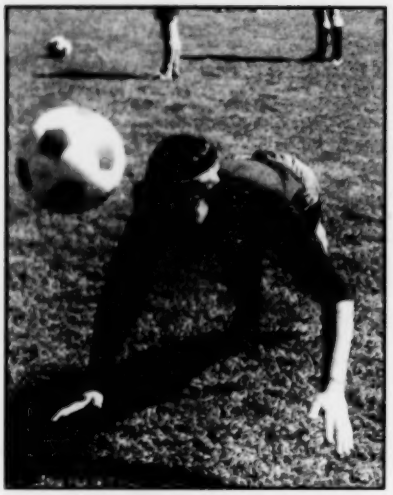
Before we preview some of the courageous questions that the authors in this issue raise, let me describe some responses that schools give when facing the unmasking of gender issues. As an aside, let me point out that using the term "schools" is a euphemism that lets us hide behind an anonymous aggregate. This is a dangerous practice that pervades much of our discourse about education. When we refer to

schools in this way, we are ignoring *who* makes up a school and *who* is making decisions for that school, and *who* is creating the community for that school. Generally, a school is composed of teachers, a principal, support staff, students, and sometimes parents. Indirectly involved also, but with direct consequences, are the people who make up the school board, the state board of education and the legislators. By referring to "schools" as if they were somehow decision-making entities, we lose sight of what the people that make up a school community might do to make education better and create a community where the well-being of *all* students is the highest priority. It would allow us to take the additional step that Young indicates feminism implies, that of "ameliorating . . . harms and disadvantages" when we find them.

Given our understanding that schools are made of real, living, breathing, decision-making agents, when gender concerns are unmasked, at times, administrators, parents, teachers, and even students respond in some of the following ways:

◆ *Ignore it and it will go away.* Unfortunately, the "elephant" doesn't go away without an intentional invitation and it continues to stomp around the place. A lot of energy is wasted when people try to maneuver around our invisible "elephant". . . energy that could be going toward growth and development. Correlated with this response is the notion that such societal issues are not schools' problem. In other words, as one principal told me (and I am paraphrasing), "my teachers are just too busy teaching their subject to worry about what may be happening in the hallways."

◆ *"That's just the way kids are."* Noting that many gender issues become unmasked during early adolescence, people involved in schools will talk about how the kids have a need to conform, how they respond to peer pressure, etc., and that there is not really a deep abiding problem with gender.



But this response negates the complexity of human and adolescent development. While these observations about adolescence are true, that does not mean that there are not more healthy and helpful ways to respond to the gender issues that take center stage at this point in development, or that we don't have the responsibility to help our children learn to live in a changing world in a more healthy and equitable way.

◆ *Blame the victim.* It is often said that when it gets right down to it, girls who are having problems with boys' harassment are often dressing inappropriately, or they are hugging the boys too much or they don't know what reactions they start by flirting. Responding in this way raises several problematic concerns. First, it places the responsibility for male action and reaction onto the females. In this way, it limits the freedom of girls to express themselves in ways they desire. There is something inherently wrong about asking girls/women to limit themselves because boys/men can't control themselves. It seems that this is also a demeaning message to boys/men. Second, it perpetuates the dichotomous stereotypes that already exist in our society and are played out in secondary schools, i.e., that girls are demeaned as sluts and boys who exhibit the same behavior are rewarded as studs. Third, and least discussed, is that this approach makes invisible girls' sexual development and desires. We are more comfortable talking about boys and their well-known testosterone-induced adolescence, but what about sexual desire in girls? Who sanctions it? Who talks about it? How can it be expressed? If girls are blamed for how they dress and/or act rather than holding boys accountable for how they respond, then what message are we sending girls about their blossoming sexuality?

◆ *Boys will be boys.* This is an outgrowth of the previous two responses. This response does nothing but perpetuate the problem. Boys will be the boys we teach them to be . . . nothing more, nothing less. (Lest I be misunderstood, this "we" is a collective one that includes of course, parents, teachers, clergy, youth leaders, media moguls, business leaders, politicians, entertainment figures. . .in other words, the collective of our communities that make up our society.)

◆ *Individual Accountability.* Having this on the list may be surprising, but often times the American penchant for individuality actually stands in the way of collective action and recognizing issues that must be dealt with communally. Most times teachers and administrators *do* honestly want to respond to the issue. Many schools have sexual harassment policies in place. I have heard, "Tell me the name of the offender and I will see to it that he is disciplined because we do not tolerate that behavior at our school." While I do not want to give anyone the idea that I am not in favor of individual accountability for actions, more times than not, in schools we need to go beyond holding an individual here or there responsible because most of the social problems that creep into the schoolhouse are not isolated to one or two students.

If these responses are not helpful, then alternatively, what *can* schools do? How can we continue to unpack this large gender issue? In the news at the beginning of this year, I was heartened by the statistics that most violent crime rates are down in the U.S. But I was

dismayed at the type of crimes that were not down, but were actually on the rise: rape and other forms of sexual violence. This is very troublesome and points to the underlying issues that our society faces with sexism. It is evidence of why we cannot stop by congratulating ourselves for providing more opportunities for girls and women today, because we have let the objectification of girls and women remain institutionally unchallenged. In a cursory manner, I will outline some of the responses that a school community could use in responding to gender harassment in order to create an equitable learning community as follows:

Media Critique.

The media is a primary carrier of the messages that inundate our children's lives, ranging from glamour magazines to music videos to sitcoms to blockbuster movies. In our world where consumerism and video images are a major component of life, our students should be prepared with the skills to critique the media blitz that they face day in and day out. They need to learn the skills to unpack or deconstruct what appears to them as the ordinariness of their lives.

Curricular Critique and Infusion.

We need to examine the curriculum and see where, why, and how girls and women may be missing, and then implement ways of educating that do not leave out half the population. (Martin, 1994) We need to continue our exploration of how we respond to girls in the classroom, continuing the work begun by Sadker and Sadker. (Sadker and Sadker, 1994) Although the most recent AAUW report indicates that advances have been made, many girls are still left out. Beyond concentrating on classroom practice, we need to understand how we define knowledge and knowing, building on the work of Belenky and many other feminists. (Belenky, 1986; Harding, 1991; Ruddick, 1989; Young 1997)

THE AMERICAN PENCHANT FOR INDIVIDUALITY ACTUALLY STANDS IN THE WAY OF COLLECTIVE ACTION AND RECOGNIZING ISSUES THAT MUST BE DEALT WITH COMMUNALLY.

Educator/Parent/Student Study Circles.

With rising violence against women coinciding with the continued objectification of the female in our media culture, we have much more to learn. We must do this together rather than apart, and in various configurations. We cannot assume that "one story" tells it all or reflects the particular experience of any given girl or woman. Hence, we need to spend time not just talking, but listening deeply to each other and the various ways our lives have been shaped by gender. The implications are that a variety of configurations and processes may be undertaken that bring people together to consider these issues. At times, groups of young women may be facilitated . . . at other times, teachers or parents will need to talk with one another. And certainly, young men will also need to share their experiences, as well as be in the position of listener and learner from the stories of young women.

Take back the "hallways."

Simply put, this is a metaphorical way of committing ourselves to the total community of the school. We must understand that our role as educators goes beyond the four walls of our own classroom to the climate that is created for our students in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and on the playground. When we "take back the hallways," we do not do it to control yet another space where our young people have let the issues of their lives emerge. Rather, we do it invitationally and share the entire environment of the school with all those who inhabit it.

Our authors in this issue help us to think about gender in some familiar and some unfamiliar ways. They take seriously Sagan's notion by asking us to consider courageous questions and challenging us to go beyond the superficial and look for the depth of answers needed in order to help the lives of girls and young women flourish. In this issue we are privileged to have Jane Roland Martin, one of the preeminent philosophers of education who has had the courage to open the dialogue surrounding gender issues, provide our featured essay. In this, she challenges us to examine the question of how gender inequity still remains invisible to many. She points to how our language functions to cover up the harassment that takes place in our schools, and recommends that as educators we must explicitly work to raise gender inequities, roles, and relationships to consciousness.

Joan McMath paints a picture with the analogy of ringing "fire bells in the night" by examining four firebells that have raised the question of gender through the use of literature. She then provides us with a view of literature that can be used to spark the imagination of girls and boys in order to challenge gender stereotypes.

bell hooks tells us that our understanding of concepts such as self-esteem (which is so highly present in the research about adolescent gender issues) is culturally specific and cannot be universally applied. Once again, she warns us that the dominant culture mistakenly applies their standard to another community when she describes this as follows:

Many feminist thinkers writing and talking about girlhood right now like to suggest that black girls have better self-esteem than their white counterparts. The measurement of this difference is often that black girls are more assertive, speak more, appear more confident. Yet in traditional

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southern-based black life, it was and is expected of girls to be articulate, to hold ourselves with dignity. Our parents and teachers were always urging us to stand up right and speak clearly. These traits were meant to uplift the race. They were not necessarily traits associated with building female self-esteem. An outspoken girl might still feel that she was worthless because her skin was not light enough or her hair the right texture. These are the variables that white researchers often do not consider when they measure the self-esteem of black females with a yardstick that was designed based on values emerging from white experience. White girls of all classes are often encouraged to be silent. But to see the opposite in different ethnic groups as a sign of female empowerment is to miss the reality that the cultural codes of that group may dictate a quite different standard by which female self-esteem is measured. To understand the complexity of black girlhood we need more work that documents that reality in all its variations and diversity. (hooks, 1996)

Expressing this sentiment in poetry, Janelle Horton graces us with her poem, "Epitome." Coupled with hooks' insight, it assists us to see each individual girl within the context of her culture and celebrates Black womanhood.

The late Tessa Logan shares with us how the development of a learning community at any age must include components of gender sensitive practices. Her engaging reflection demonstrates clearly that even young children of five or six bring the gender expectations of their society to the classroom. The message here is that we not wait until middle or high school to address these issues with our students.

Barbara Waxman and Liz Young, mother/scholar and daughter collaborate in their wonderful reflection about how school impacts not only the "voice" of a young teenage woman, but also how it may silence the "voice" of her mother/scholar as well. After reading this, I wonder where the voices of girls and women go when the institutions of our society do not accept their anger or critique.

Craig Segal poses one of the most enduring questions for a caring and thoughtful teacher: Am I making a difference in the lives of my students? His story highlights that even though we bring issues of gender to the fore in our classrooms, how do we know that the lives of the students in our classes are improved because of this exploration?

A journey through our gender world would not be complete without acknowledging the tensions, confusions, and struggles of teenage girls as they come to define their own sexuality. In her essay, Remie Calalang shares her story to remind us as teachers that an enormous amount of crucial learning, growth, and development are occurring in the lives of our students while we pay attention to math, history, and English! How might a school community support young people in these important journeys as they try out different ways of being in the world? How might our curriculum incorporate our students' lives?

These articles demonstrate how other influences intersect and interweave with gender. In this regard, Julie Biddle explores the complexity of adolescent mothering and her equally complex application of the ethic of care. Her story raises questions about how we, as adults in the lives of our students, can care in a way that is not instrumental or dominating in nature, but respects the life stories of all involved.

Lora Liddell writes eloquently about what happens to many of our young girls as they enter into adolescence. The question this raises, after reading her account, is how can we as teachers pay attention to these too common struggles of the young women who sit quietly in our classrooms?

Nancy Smith follows up Liddell's personal story with a review of Peggy Orenstein's book, *SchoolGirls*, that chronicles the school experience of young adolescent women, the influence of class and ethnicity, and the work of a wonderful teacher who is creating a gender sensitive classroom. This is followed by a reflective review of a piece of literature entitled, *Silences*, by Tillie Olsen. In this review, Janet MacLennan chooses a style where her own personal reflection weaves with the powerful insights that Olsen raises—creating a chain of thought-provoking ideas for us as educators.

Our journal concludes with a resource section of literature, of organizations you can contact for further information and of books chronicling some of the seminal research in the field of gender and education. We hope you can take advantage of these resources and we welcome you as we continue on our gender journey.

Jaylynne Hutchinson, Ph.D.,
teaches in Cultural Studies in Education at Ohio University and specializes in the use of narrative, feminist studies, and the democratic community. She is also director of the Institute for Democracy in Education.

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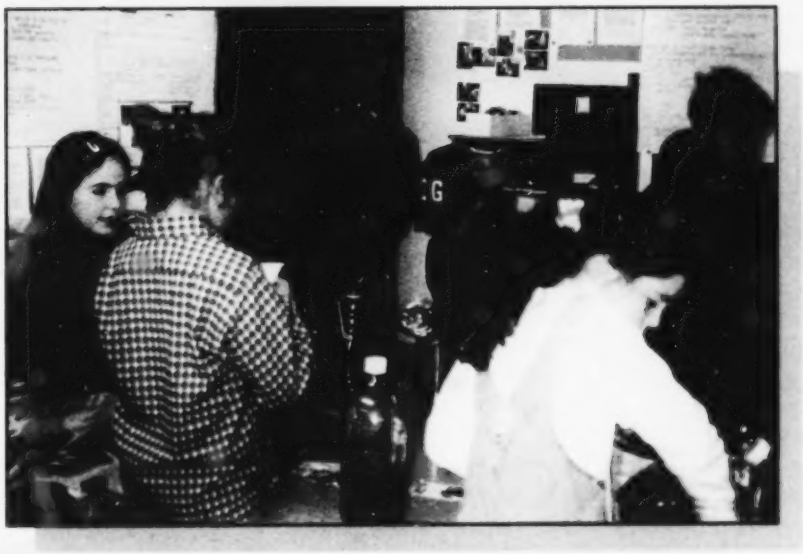
GENDER IN THE CLASSROOM:
Now You See It, Now You Don't

BY JANE ROLAND MARTIN



PART I:
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Scenario 1. The year is 1989. Sixth graders in a Boston area public school are asked to tell the first word that comes to their minds about the other sex. The girl's say: 'Fine. Jerks. Conceited. Ugly. Crazy. Dressy. Sexy. Dirty minds. Boring. Rude. Cute. Stuck up. Desperate. Sexually abusive. Punks.' The boys say: 'Pumping ('big tits'). Nasty. Vagina. Dope bodies (big breasts and behinds). Door knob (breasts). Hooker. Skeezer ('a girl who will 'do it' with 50 guys')'. (Jackson 1989).

The scene switches to Australia. It is still 1989 and primary girls are speaking:

- There's a group of boys in our class who always tease us and call us—you know, dogs, aids, slut, moll and that.
- This boy used to call us big-tits and period bag and used to punch us in the breasts.
- They call us rabies, dogs, aids
- They reckon I'm a dog. My mother gave me to them. He said, 'Oh, come here, I've got a pet for you. Do you want my dog?' And he gave me to them as a pet dog. (Clark 1989, pp. 25, 39, 40)

Now it is the spring of 1997 and a teacher in the western part of the US writes me a letter:

Dear Jane,

I love teaching and seem to understand middle school kids. I teach in a rural town. . .I find myself talking to kids about their homophobic/racist/sexist language more than I'd like to believe. There are a few boys in each class who become so angry with me whenever I bring up women in a positive way. For example, I asked all my classes to do a quick-write about important women in their lives before International Women's Day. More than a few boys wrote 'Women suck. Men rule!' They didn't resist or become defensive looking at other types of intolerance in U.S. history, but they seemed very threatened. (We discussed this but there were several still angry).

The question on my mind is, what name should we give the boys' behavior? The label 'name calling' is accurate, but we are also within our rights to call their behavior 'intolerance' or perhaps 'prejudice.' Indeed, the boys' language expresses such hatred of girls and women that we are even justified in calling it 'misogyny.' Which label should one choose? It is no help to say, 'Choose the one that is true, because all four labels speak the truth. Is it relevant that of the four labels, only 'misogyny' illuminates the gendered aspect of the boys' behavior? Does it matter that the other three effectively mask just this? It is relevant and it does matter.

Scenario 2. Again the year is 1989. An Australian primary school girl reports: 'They take things off us and drag us into the boys' toilets.' (Clark 1989) Then, in the 1990s, events like the following keep happening in the United States:

- an eighth grade girl gets up to speak in class and the boys 'moo.' (Stein and Sjostrom 1994, p. 105)
- a middle school boy grabs a girl's thighs, rear, and breasts. (Orenstein 1994, p.148)
- a boy snaps a girl's bra, calls her a fat horse, and pinches her bottom
- boys put their hands in girls' shirts, ask them if they are virgins, and touch their bodies. (Stein and Sjostrom 1994, p. 98)

How should we label these incidents? Some call them 'teasing.' Others say they

are simply 'adolescent rites of passage.' Should we insist that they cross over the line and label them 'bullying'? Or do we call them 'sexual harassment'? Once again, whereas one of the labels illuminates the gendered dimension of the boys' behavior, the others cause this aspect to disappear from sight.

Scenario 3. Flashback to the 1970s. The scene is a school in the Central Atlantic region of the United States:

Six year old girls are helping those classmates — almost always boys — who are in trouble. When Martin is distraught because no one likes him, Jeannette comes to the rescue. Anne comforts Michael when a film makes him cry and Meg does the same for Tony. In a testing period in which many of the first grade boys do not seem to understand the instructions, those girls who finish early immediately look around the room, see who needs assistance, and go to their sides. No boy offers to help another child and almost every child who receives help from the girls is male. (Best 1974, p. 89, 98)

Now fast forward to the north of Sweden in the 1990s:

In public school classrooms in which girls are the best readers, the girls take leadership roles in their reading groups even when teachers do not ask them to, and shoulder responsibility not just for keeping order in the groups, but for correcting the boys' reading. In classrooms in which boys are the best readers, the reverse does not occur. On the contrary, the boys create situations in which they compete with each other and ridicule classmates who are not up to standard. When asked if the high achieving boys might occasionally lend the girls a helping hand, teachers say it is unthinkable that the boys 'would agree to waste their talents on helping girls.' (Berge 1998, p.10)

What should we call the children's behavior? Should we name it 'pupils helping one another'? Perhaps we should title it 'pupils enacting an ethic of care'? Although both labels are accurate, each conceals the gendered dimension of what transpires in the classroom. Indeed, the gender aspect even disappears when, in acknowledgment of the boys' lack of reciprocity, one speaks of the girls falling into 'the caring trap.' Call what transpires 'a gendered division of classroom labor,' however, and the gendered character of the transaction is illuminated.

Six year old girls are helping those classmates—almost always boys—who are in trouble. When Martin is distraught because no one likes him, Jeannette comes to the rescue.

Scenario 4. Back in the U.S. it is still the 1990s:

In a Washington, D.C. area fifth grade math class the boys sit on one side of the teacher and the girls on the other. The teacher hands the math book to a girl to hold and then, turning her back on the girls, focuses her teaching on the boys. (Sadker and Sadker 1993, p. 3) In a California intermediate school math class the girls raise their hands to answer questions and are not called upon. Meanwhile the boys shout out the answers and yell 'I know,' even when they don't. (Orenstein 1994, p.12)

What label do we attach to these classroom vignettes? We can call them 'unfair,' as they surely are. We can also apply the label 'teacher favoritism.' Or we can highlight the gendered nature of the interactions by bringing the phenomena in question under the illuminating concept, 'a chilly classroom climate for girls.'

Part II:
Today the Classroom, Tomorrow the World

I wish I could say that the decision of what label to attach to a particular classroom phenomenon is a matter of personal preference and leave it at that. But here, as in so many other cases, what at first glance may appear to be a private decision has political, social and ethical ramifications. Yes, when a 'gender-conscious' tag applies, we can call the behavior something else. But to do so is to obscure connections between school and world.

As I write, sexual harassment is rampant in U.S. workplaces. A few months ago the business section of my daily newspaper carried a report of sexual harassment on Wall Street. Soon after, the news of sexual harassment at Harvard Business School appeared on page one. Last week I read a review of a book by a woman who resigned from the Stanford University Medical School because of sexual harassment there. Yesterday, I read about the harassment of women in my city's police department. Now I do not for a moment suggest that adult sexual harassers *learned* to become harassers in school, nor do I mean to say that most school offenders *first* learn to harass there. Young and old alike can all too easily acquire the taste for sexual harassment and the knowledge of how to do it from newspapers, books, magazines, billboards, television, the internet — not to mention from observing friends and family, peers and elders. I do, however, want to insist that the decision to eschew the sexual harassment label in school contexts matters.

In the worst case scenario, this

decision carries with it a failure to intervene, and this lapse, in turn, sends the implicit message that the harassing behavior is acceptable. In consequence, the actions of those boys who are already adept at sexual harassment are reinforced. And after seeing their peers engage in the practice with impunity, other boys may decide to join them.

But now suppose that intervention does occur and the offending behavior ceases. Avoidance of the sexual harassment label still exacts its toll. Call what the boys say and do to the girls 'teasing' or 'bullying' or 'an adolescent rite of passage' and young people will be unprepared for life in the workplaces they will soon inhabit. Withhold the sexual harassment label and girls will not be forewarned that in the near future they will very likely see the behavior of the boys repeated by adult men; nor will they know what to do about the men's behavior when it occurs, let alone that it is against the law. Withhold the sexual harassment label and the boys, in turn, will not realize that the actions of grown men closely resemble their own forbidden classroom behavior and are equally wrongful. But then, having been taught that teasing and bullying are wrong; taking it for granted that only young people tease and bully; and assuming that the way adults behave in the workplace is the way one should behave, they may unthinkingly lapse into earlier patterns of behavior.

Would that the ramifications of withholding the sexual harassment label in classroom contexts stops here, but they do not. Despite the fact that women can now enter professions and occupations that were once male bastions, women still congregate in — and men continue to avoid — what have long been the predominantly female occupations of teaching, nursing, social work, and allied activities. The sexual harassment of women that is an everyday occurrence in business, banking, medicine, courts of law, police departments and the halls of academe is certainly not the only contributor to this gendered division of labor. Yet it undeniably reinforces this arrangement by serving to discourage women from entering these formerly all male bastions in the first place and by making some of those women who are courageous — or perhaps foolhardy — enough to have entered them sufficiently miserable that they will resign their jobs and move into the friendlier women dominated occupations.

It is difficult to comment on the workplace's gendered division of labor without appearing to share the culture's devaluation of the occupations to which women now flock. Let me stress, therefore, that I cast no aspersions on what have historically been considered women's fields. On the contrary, I believe them to be among the most important there are. Yet their relatively low status among the professions and the low pay commanded by their practitioners, make it imperative to ask why so many women seem drawn to them.

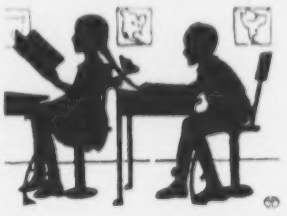
The sexual harassment in the work place is one reason, and, as a contributor to this phenomenon, the sexual harassment in the classroom is also implicated. But this is by no means the only contribution the classroom makes to society's gendered division of labor. Call the behavior of the young girls 'helping' or 'caring' and the connections between school and world are hidden. Speak instead of a gendered classroom division of labor and one sees that, from their earliest years in school, girls serve apprenticeships to 'the caring professions.' One also realizes that the boys do not.

Label what the boys say to the girls 'name calling' instead of 'misogyny' and the classroom climate 'unfair' instead of 'a chilly one for girls' and more connections between school and world are lost to view. In higher education today, fields of study are sharply divided by gender, with women predominating in the arts and humanities, education and nursing, and men in engineering and the mathematical and physical sciences. It is customary to use the language of 'choice' when discussing higher education's gender tracking. Insofar as college and university students elect their courses from a wide range of alternatives, this terminology may accurately reflect the facts, but at the same time it is deeply deceptive. 'Choice' rhetoric masks the degree to which the self-selection that directs girls and boys, women and men, into different courses of study and,

ultimately, into different occupations is influenced by cultural expectations and the social pressures they exert.

The chilly classroom climate for girls, the sexual harassment that occurs in the classroom, and the misogyny all bear witness to the fact that these pressures and expectations are operant inside the classroom as well as in the larger society. True, parents may encourage their daughters to study languages and literature rather than math and science, and media images may send the same message. Still, one can be sure that the classroom climate itself causes some girls to escape to warmer educational environments and that sexual harassment and the outright misogyny in their turn convince many to seek refuge in courses of study pursued mainly by members of their own gender. And, of course, once girls remove themselves from areas of study in which men predominate, they will find that they have effectively been tracked into the traditional female occupations.

Once girls remove themselves from areas of study in which men predominate, they will find that they have effectively been tracked into the traditional female occupations.



Part III:
To Colligate or Discolligate for Gender, That Is the Question

The 'Dear Jane' letter ended with: "Any PRACTICAL suggestions would be appreciated." However, what one does in the classroom depends on what one calls what happens there. Call bra snapping or grabbing a girl's breasts 'an adolescent rite of passage' and you may just as well sit back and wait for the boys to mature. Label "you're a slut" 'name calling' and an apology by the boy may suffice. Call Mary helping Johnny 'caring' and you need only praise her for her altruism. Call these same interactions sexual harassment, misogyny, and a gendered division of classroom labor, respectively, and far more drastic action will be demanded.

Of course, the issue is not quite as simple as I make it sound, for what you call a classroom interaction depends on what you see and how you see it. If, seeing Johnny snap Mary's bra, you take it to be a separate, isolated event you will have no reason to call it 'sexual harassment.' If, on the other hand, you take it to be part of a larger pattern of boys' attitudes and behavior toward girls — and if you see that pattern as itself related to the attitudes and behavior of grown men — labels like 'good natured fun' and 'boys will be boys' may not seem so appropriate.

Years ago in a discussion of the methods of history, the philosopher William Dray isolated a form of explanation he called 'colligation.' (Dray 1957) "We tend to think that historical explanations answer 'why' questions, but in actuality historians often explain *what* something is or *what* some series or group of events amounts to. They do this," Dray said, "by bringing the phenomena they study under some illuminating concept. In his memorable example of colligation, a historian when studying events in France at the end of the 18th century suddenly says, 'Aha, it's a revolution!'"

In 1982, feminist researchers Roberta Hall and Bernice Sandler did something very like this. After reviewing research about such apparently trivial teacher behavior as making eye contact with students, asking questions, waiting for answers, learning student names, giving instructions on assignments, giving feedback to students, calling on students, and so on, they said: "Aha, it's a chilly climate for women!"

'Sexual harassment,' 'misogyny,' 'a gendered division of classroom labor' are also colligatory concepts like 'revolution' and 'a chilly classroom climate for women.' They pull together what otherwise might be perceived as disparate phenomena. And educational research leaves no doubt that the patterns designated by 'gender-conscious' labels are there to be seen. The question remains of whether it is prudent for teachers to choose colligatory labels that call attention to the gendered character of classroom phenomena. School girls who experience sexual harassment are loath to report it to the authorities lest the boys take their revenge. (Chamberlain and Houston 1998) Are not teachers who say, 'It's misogyny!,' 'It's sexual harassment!,' or even 'It's a chilly climate for girls!' also at risk of reprisals?

In many, many circumstances, *discolligating* for gender — by which I mean deflecting attention from an offending phenomenon's gendered character and from its connection to larger gendered patterns by refusing to apply a relevant gender-conscious concept — may seem the prudent policy. But prudence speaks to one's self-interest in the short run, whereas teaching by its very nature is an 'other-directed' profession whose practitioners cannot in good conscience ignore the long run. In the long run, the classroom practices in question affect not only children's daily lives but the lives of women and men both at home and in the workplace.

Without a doubt, it takes courage today to highlight both the gendered character of offending classroom phenomena and their relationship to

larger gendered patterns by bringing them under gender-conscious concepts; in other words, to colligate for gender. Fortunately, there is strength in numbers and no good reason why decisions about whether or not to colligate or discolligate classroom events along gender lines have to be made by individual teachers acting alone.

Assuming that working in concert teachers colligate for gender, what practical suggestions have I for the classroom? Needless to say, it all depends on the particular circumstances. I, however, believe that there is no substitute for raising to consciousness the hidden curriculum in sexism which is carried by the offending classroom practices; no substitute for bringing the practices themselves into the subject matter of the overt curriculum; indeed, no substitute for making the late 20th century's revolution in gender roles and relationships itself one of the primary subjects of that curriculum. (Martin 1992, 1994)

Jane Roland Martin is an emerita professor of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She is the author of *Reclaiming a Conversation*, *The Schoolhome*, and *Changing the Educational Landscape*, as well as numerous essays on gender and education.

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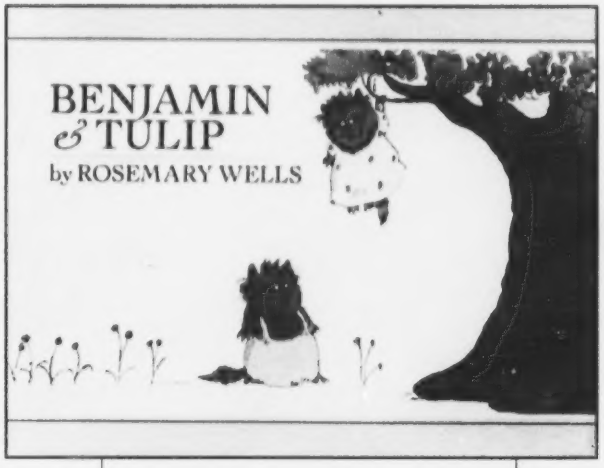
essay

Fire Bells in the Night:
The Impact of Children's Literature on Gender Development & Imagination

BY JOAN SCANLON MCMATH



Anita Silvey, (1995) former editor of *The Horn Book Magazine*, relates in her moving editorial, 'A Fire Bell in the Night,' that at the end of his life, Thomas Jefferson wrote about slavery and the Missouri Compromise: "This momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror!" In the past four decades our society has been awakened by four fire bells in the night, each rung by a woman warning us of the constraints placed on the development of girls and women.

Firebell Number One. In 1961 a young researcher watched a five-year-old African-American child in the Manhattanville Nursery School in New York look up from the picture book she was holding and ask "Why are they always white children?" When Nancy Larrick (1965) published her research in *The Saturday Review*, she noted the unerring wisdom of the little girl who had articulated the omission of people from parallel cultures in children's books. Larrick's 'The All White World of Children's Books' warned of the mixed messages sent to African-American children; the law of the land may be integrated but that is not what they see in their books. Equally unjust were white children seeing only themselves in positions of authority and never seeing themselves negotiate, compromise or empathize.

Firebell Number Two. Twelve years later Rosemary Wells wrote and illustrated a 5 1/2 X 7 1/4 inch book titled *Benjamin and Tulip* (1973). The cover depicts a gleeful raccoon named Tulip hanging from the limb of a tree looking slyly down at a wary raccoon named Benjamin on the ground. Readers learn on the first page "Every time Benjamin passed Tulip's house she said, 'I'm gonna beat you up.'" If we remember that in 1973 most books for children portrayed aggressors as males, in this humorous little story Wells reverses gender roles and portrays a female as someone with whom to be reckoned.

Firebell Number Three. In 1982, nine years after Tulip beat up Benjamin, Carol Gilligan published *Other Voices* in which she took issue with her mentor and colleague Lawrence Kohlberg, better known to us for his stage theory of moral development. Lesser known is that the original sample for his study was based on one hundred white, lower and middle class males. Gilligan theorized that more women tend to value 1) the approval of others and 2) being merciful. Gilligan goes on to point out that since these qualities are seen as representing a lower stage of moral development, the ordering of the stages may reflect a bias in favor of males. She suggested that women and men differ in the ways in which they develop morality, and spoke loudly and often about the omission of how women develop morality.

Firebell Number Four. Nine years after *Other Voices*, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) rang their fire bell in the night with the results of a nationwide poll they had conducted with students 9-15 years-old. The poll examined the impact of gender on self-esteem, career aspirations, educational experiences and interest in math and science. Results indicated two distressing facts. First, as girls reach adolescence they suffer a greater drop in self-esteem than boys, and second, they are discouraged from a wide range of academic pursuits (1991). Their 1992 report was even gloomier, as they found that girls receive an inferior education to boys in America's schools.

Have these four fire bells in the night awakened society to the possibility of and potential for changing expectations toward women? It has long been noted that books for children reflect the attitudes, beliefs and values of contem-

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porary society. If so, do picture books reflect the four fire bells in the night rung so clearly by women in the past four decades?

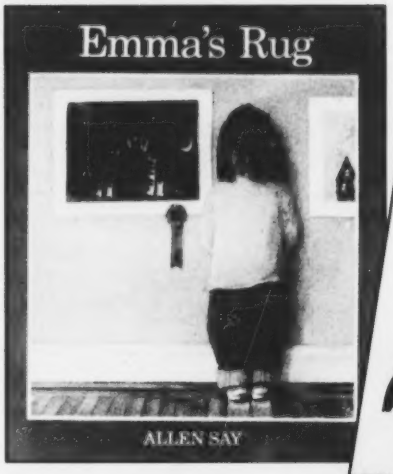
I examined a random sample of eighty picture books published between 1988 and 1998 intended for children between the ages of birth and eight years. Twenty of the books were found to be relevant to the four "firebells" mentioned earlier and could be used by teachers to fuel the imagination of girls and boys alike, and challenge gendered expectations.

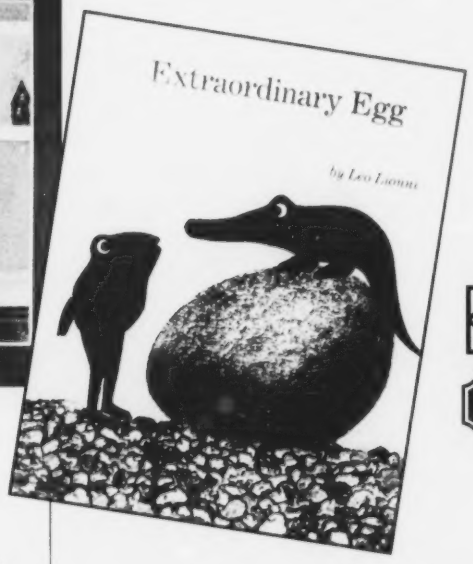
Women and Girls from Parallel Cultures

While blankies serve as transition objects for many young children, Emma's was a rug. "Emma loved the rug. She lay on it and sat on it and she was happy. When she began to walk, she carried it everywhere she went, but never stepped on it. Now she only stared at it, sitting perfectly still, for long periods of time." As time went on Emma began to paint and draw; so well, in fact, that she won several prizes. One morning the mayor invited her to accept first prize in the citywide art competition. Usually Emma kept the rug in a dresser drawer well out-of-sight.

On this one occasion Emma put the rug on her bed with the first prize certificate on top. Emma's mother had long forgotten its existence, and upon seeing it, promptly deposited it in the washing machine. Just as the rug shriveled and shrank, so did Emma's desire to draw and paint. Her mind pictures had gone with the rug in *Emma's Rug* by Allen Say. This richly-illustrated story of creative, Asian-American Emma may remind readers of what the fox told The Little Prince — "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

Ernestine Avery Powell stepped off the Silver Star at the Robeson County Train Depot in Lumberton, North Carolina. She had returned to the place of her birth and would spend time with





Uncle June, Aunt Beulah and Cousin Jack. More than anything she wishes "that me and Jack will be friends." She sleeps in her Mama's childhood room, wears her Mama's overalls and visits Grandmama Zulah Thompson's Burial Place. Eight-year-old Ernestine has come home for the first time to the place of her birth. Based on her own childhood experiences, the author recreates a mood of warmth, love, respect and community. Her husband, Jerry Pinkney, uses pencil, colored pencils and watercolor to bring to life the Avery family, their home and the spirit in which they co-exist harmoniously with their surroundings. So vividly does Pinkney unveil details that one can feel Ernestine's new organdy pinafore, the warm North Carolina sand, hear Aunt Beulah saying, "Zulah never did take to wearing no shoes! Come here, child and give your Aunt Beulah some sugar" and smell the warm North Carolina night. Resourceful, determined and African-American, there are few who can resist Ernestine's nearly universal appeal. *Back Home* (Dial 1992) was written by Gloria Pinkney and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney.

What Zeesie Saw on Delancey Street (Simon & Schuster, 1996) was a secret she kept because to do otherwise would dishonor the tradition behind the 'money room.' Zeesie has a dollar bill from Bubbeh and Zaydeh to spend at her first package party and this special occasion is happening on her seventh birthday. Based on the author's childhood in the tenement neighborhoods on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the smells, sights, sounds and tastes of the family-oriented Jewish-American community envelope readers. This delightful story about Zeesie's discovery and decision offers a wealth of information about the traditions and values of this culture. Adventuresome, imaginative and slightly resistant to authority, Zeesie must find a maturity equal to the maxim of the mitzvah, a good deed that involves taking when you need and giving when you can. And this courageous girl does, but to learn the secret that Zeesie kept, one must read this book.

Late in his far-too-brief life, Arthur Ashe recounted the image of his mother waving good-bye to him as he left for school. He remembered the blue corduroy robe she wore on that school morning when he was six and a half-years-old; it was the last time he saw her alive. When he was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988, he and Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, the critically acclaimed photographer, had a twenty-two month old daughter. By the time

Camera was five she was on intimate terms with her daddy's illness. *Daddy and Me* (Knopf, 1993) is a brilliant, memorable photographic essay of Camera and Arthur Ashe's life together. Camera's parents wanted her to have myriad images of her daddy, unlike only the one he had of his mother. The courage, love and resilience of this mother and daughter appears on each page of this book and in their lives since Ashe's death in 1993.

If your papa carries you to church in a burlap feed sack, and if your Mama puts a big quilt of rainbow colors over you in the wagon, it does not matter if the Appalachian Sundays are snowy-blowy. Papa likes Mama's quilt. He says it, "has all the nice, bright colors of the day." Day was wonderful to him because he saw it rarely; coal miners go to work before the sun comes up and come home after the sun goes down. When Papa got sick with miner's cough, Minna stayed home to help Mama makes quilts for money. Papa encourages Minna to go to school; but how can she without a winter coat? Papa promises to see to it but dies during the summer. Mama's neighbors make a coat of their quilting scraps for Minna. She loves her coat and proudly wears it to school. Her schoolmates taunt her and call her Rag Coat. Profoundly dismayed, Minna runs into the woods. During her crucible she feels the feedbag lining of her coat and it is as if Papa's arms and voice are wrapped around her. She returns to school, to tell her classmates, "don't you see? These are all your rags. Look, Shane, here is that blanket of yours that your mama's sister gave you the night you were born." As Minna relates a little piece of everyone's life through her coat, her friends gain respect for Minna's insight and courage. *The Rag Coat* (1991) by Lauren Mills portrays in text and illustrations a young, resilient Appalachian girl.

Women and Girls are Engaged in Non-Stereotypical Roles

Grania O'Malley was born at Clare Island Castle, Ireland in 1530 and "twas her Ma who remarked 'Look, she has the light of the sea in her eye'. She was tutored by the monks and begged to sail with her father's fleet for he was the greatest sea captain and pirate of that age. Her Ma said "twas no life for a girl and so Grania ran off." When she returned, it was with very little hair for Grania determined that if she looked like a boy she could sail like a boy. Her father's heart melted and from that day forward he taught her the ways of the Irish and English seas. A sea queen and wife by the age of sixteen, she gave birth to her first son on the high seas. Her son was but three days old when a fierce battle found Grania using a blunderbuss on Turkish pirates. Two widowhood's, four children, a stint in prison and a death sentence were merely penultimate acts. Queen Elizabeth I, in typical English fashion, appointed a vicious, cruel governor to subdue the Irish. The Pirate Queen, as Grania had come to be known, pondered on this grave injustice. Finally, she sailed to England and gained audience with another queen, Elizabeth I. The outcome of their meeting is a part of recorded history, as are significant portions of the life of *The Pirate Queen*, written and illustrated in 1995 by Emily Arnold McCulley.

Previous tall tale protagonists have been mostly male. In 1994 author Paul Zelinsky, and illustrator Anne Isaacs, changed that tradition when they unearthed the birth record and life story of Angela Longrider. She was two-years-old when she built her first log cabin and at twelve she lifted a wagon train out of Dejection Swamp in her birth state of Tennessee. The pioneers who had given up hope thought her an angel and from that day to this, Angela Longrider is known as Swamp Angel. A few years later she joined a host of Tennessee daredevils to capture a huge bear who preyed continuously upon the settlers' food cellars. The daredevils jeered at her and were shocked with her responses:

"Hey Angel! Shouldn't you be home mending a quilt?"

Says she, "Quiltin' is men's work!"

"Well, how about baking a pie, Angel?"

"I aim to," says she. "A bear pie."

When Angel does meet the bear, a terrible fight commences in the course of which Angel and Tarnation, the bear, wrestle among the Tennessee hills. They stirred up so much dust that those hills came to be known as the Great Smoky Mountains. The battle rages on until . . . someone wins. *Swamp Angel* (1994) is a woman who inspires legends.

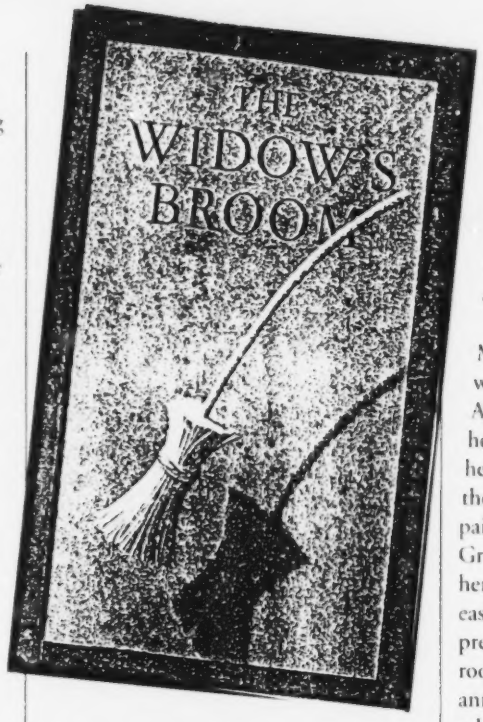
In the end her former antagonist called her a brave woman. To understand his accolade, one has to start at the beginning when she was an ordinary, but lonely widow (OLW). The day on which it begins, became ordinary when Minna Shaw (OLW) found a bruised and bloody witch lying in her garden. More kind than frightened, Minna put the witch to bed. The second day was extraordinary too, because the witch was gone leaving behind only her broom. Of course, Minna assumed that it had no power since it and the witch had crashed in her garden. Two weeks later Minna was somewhat shocked to see the broom sweeping the floor! Not being a women to look a gift mare in the face, Minna accepted gratefully the wide variety of tasks the broom performed. Not much time elapsed before her neighbors, the Spiveys, found out about the broom.

"This is a wicked, wicked thing,"

said Mr. Spivey. "This is the devil." As word spread, the broom became the object of much fear and concern among neighboring husbands. Wives, on the other hand, looked upon it with favor. The issue became an incendiary one when neighbors arrived, demanded the broom and burned it at the stake. Once again a period of time elapsed until Minna reported that she had seen the ghost of the broom! Frightened once again by the unknown, the Spiveys again prejudged the broom and moved away. It is doubtful whether the Spiveys would have understood Minna Shaw's reward for her tolerance and acceptance of a diverse broom. If you'd like to know about the reward, read *Widow's Broom* (1992) by Chris Van Allsburg.

New illustrations by Richard Egielski in 1991 added a contemporary flavor to *"Fire! Fire!" Said Mrs. McGuire* first published in 1971. The rhyming text and complimentary illustrations tell of a fire announced by the television news anchor-woman, Mrs. McGuire. "Where? Where? Said Mrs. Bear." Readers learn about the fire from a variety of women engaged in very nontraditional occupations with the exception of Mrs. Votter who calls for water, wears her red dress short, her blond hair long and hangs out in doorways. Mrs. Brown is a painter; Mrs. Moore is a fire fighter; Mrs. Kopp is one and Mrs. Chi is a photojournalist. Children of the nineties may not realize the hard journey traveled by so many of the women in this story. Think, however, of how far the women have come to be portrayed in a natural matter-of-fact 'always been that way' fashion.

Do young contemporary children think about their mothers' occupations? At least one worries about the inherent dangers in *Mama is a Miner* (Lyon, 1992). Daily, Mama rides the mantrap into the heart of Black Mountain to the coalmines. Daily, Mama shovels, scoops, bends and sweats with the members of her crew. The little girl understands when Mama tells her, "Hard work for hard times." Cattalon's



illustrations reveal the happiness the little girl, her brother and father experience when Mama is safely home. An umbrella of love sheds lightness on this family whose mama spends much time in the darkness.

Women and Girls Portrayed Positively When They Seek the Approval of Others and Show Mercy to Them

Mom, Dad and Timmie visit Gram, Mom's mom who used to live with them at the Sunshine Home. Because Gram can't walk she's in a wheelchair like many of the other residents. Timmie decides the smell is one like "the green bar that Mom hangs in the toilet bowl . . . that works for five hundred flushes." Mom and Gram are cheery and say nice things to each other. In fact, mom's voice is one that Timmie has never heard before (not unlike the teacher who talks to the class in one tone when a parent visits and then sounds quite different after the parent leaves). The visit is fraught with emotion and in the aftermath mom cries and remembers that she forgot to give Gram a picture. Timmie takes it back in and finds Gram in tears, too. Both Gram and Mom have sought desperately the approval of each other — Mom for putting Gram in the Sunshine Home and Gram for proving how content she is with the decision. Timmie effects a rapprochement that strengthens his Mom's resolve to bring Gram home. *Sunshine Home* (1994) is a timely tale derived from contemporary issues.

In *White Wash* (Walker 1997) Mauricio resents waiting for and walking home his little sister, Helene-Angel. In fact, he won't even look at her and doesn't see the hawks surround her until it's too late. The gang calls them mud people and sprays white paint over Helene-Angel's face. Grandma cleans her face, but neither her fear nor her brother's guilt are so easily assuaged. To quiet her feelings she pretends she is a statue and stays in her room for days. At last Grandma announces that she must return to school. Helene-Angel's anxiety is superseded by her need for approval from her classmates because "anybody could see that I was an embarrassment to myself, my friends, the whole world, the universe. I could never go back to school." Reluctantly, Helene-Angel opens the door to find her friends who declare, "We missed you so much! If we all stick together, no one will dare bother you or anybody else, right?" ◦ It appears that the need for approval is as strong as her show of mercy to Mauricio as she urges him to take a stand for their right to walk unharmed to school.

Leo Lionni, distinguished artist and author, could have met with Carol Gilligan before inventing Jessica, the heroine of *An Extraordinary Egg* (Knopf, 1994). The first two pages reveal her desire for approval: "On Pebble Island, there lived three frogs: Marilyn, August and one who was always somewhere else. That one's name was Jessica. Jessica was full of wonder. She would go on long walks, way to the other side of Pebble Island and return at the end of the day, shouting, 'Look what I found?' And even if it was nothing but an ordinary little pebble, she would say, 'Isn't it extraordinary?' But Marilyn and August were never impressed."

Later, Jessica rolled home a white round pebble that brought forth astonishment as well as information from Marilyn who knew everything about everything. Not a pebble, but a chicken egg, was her conclusion. When the egg cracked, "a long scaly creature that walked on four legs" emerged and confirmed Marilyn's chicken identification. Jessica and the 'chicken' were inseparable until the day they learned that the 'chicken's' mother was looking for it. Marilyn found it quite silly when Jessica told her what the mother chicken had called her baby. If you want to know, read *An Extraordinary Egg* and meet Jessica, whose need for approval led to a wonderful friendship.

In addition to capturing the 1994 American Booksellers' 'Book Of The Year,' *Stellaluna* continues to capture the hearts of readers everywhere. Separated shortly after birth from her mother, Stellaluna, a bat lands in a nest inhabited by three baby birds. To get along she is assimilated into the folkways and mores of the bird culture. During flying practice some days later, Stellaluna loses her way and spends the night in a tree. Unconsciously she has returned to the bat colony and is recognized by one of the members. Happily, she is reunited with her mother. Anxious to introduce her family to Pip, Flitter and Flap (the birds), she invites them to spend the day. Eagerly she tells of the fun they will have during night flying. Alas, Pip, Flitter and Flap are ill-equipped to cavort in the dark and find themselves plummeting toward the ground. Stellaluna's mercy is not strained as she rescues them, "swooping about, grabbing her friends in the air. She lifted them to a tree, and the birds grasped a branch. Stellaluna hung from the limb above them." Her mercy cements the bond among them.

The Great Depression took its toll on families through the economic crises that crested. At least one way for families to cope was to send a child to live with a relative until things got better. This is exactly what happened to Lydia Grace Finch on September 4, 1935, when she went to stay with her Uncle Jim. Lydia writes letters to her family in which she describes events of her new life. She, of course, wants to please Uncle Jim, but he never smiles. She has a passion for gardening but sees no way to fulfill her desire until the day she discovers the roof. She gathers dirt from the vacant lot and plants the seeds her grandmother sends her in assorted containers. She keeps her roof garden a secret but confides in a letter to her grandma, "I'm planning on a big smile from Uncle Jim in the future." On July 4, 1936, he closes the store at noon to celebrate the holiday. Lydia Grace Finch, now known as 'the gardener,' can't wait for him to see the profusion of blooms that have been growing right over his head. Once again, Uncle Jim doesn't smile, but brings a beautiful cake that, "I truly believe equals one thousand smiles." *The Gardener* (Ferrar, Straus, Giroux, 1997) portrays Lydia's need for approval as the catalyst for the creation of beauty and friendship. In fact, everyone in this story is happier after they become involved with this plucky heroine.

Girls and Women with High Self-Esteem Engage in a Wide Variety of Academic Pursuits

Mrs. Fandini was a most unusual mother with an equally unusual profession. She had very high hair, a green and purple accordion-pleated dress and yellow dancing shoes. Also, one of her six dogs wore a hat. Her living room had a variety of trapezes and her family got dressed up everyday. When it was time for her children's friends to go home, her elephant transported them. Guess how she brought home her groceries? Standing on the back of her white horse balancing a bag of food on her head! Mrs. Fandini supervised the laundry and some of it hung on the elephant's ears, some on a tree and a little on the clothesline; it could only be a little because the Fandini children used it as a tightrope. The neighbors thought Mrs. Fandini was strange, but it bothered her not one bit! Her career as a high wire aerialist was successful and she became the most popular mom on her street. *The Fabulous Flying Fandinis* (1996) is a story for all seasons.

Lilly, of *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* (1996) is the poster girl for self-esteem, especially on the Monday morning after Granny has taken her shopping. "Lilly had a new pair of movie star sunglasses, complete with glittery diamonds and a chain like Mr. Slinger's. She had three shiny quarters. And, best of all, she had a brand new purple plastic purse that played a jaunty tune when it was opened." Mr. Slinger was Lilly's teacher and she loved him even more than the pointy pencils, squeaky chalk, privacy of her own desk, fish sticks, chocolate milk and the lightbulb lab where she got to go when she had free time. She played teacher at home and made her little brother, Julius, listen and listen and listen. She eschewed her career goals of becoming a surgeon, ambulance driver and diva for that of a teacher. Unfortunately, on that eventful Monday morning mentioned earlier, Mr. Slinger and Lilly disagreed. She wanted to tell her classmates about her purple plastic purse and Mr. Slinger wanted her to wait until Sharing Time. Lilly simply could not wait. Before her shocked eyes, Mr. Slinger put her things in his desk drawer until the end of the day. Lilly is hurt, then angry and makes a drawing of Mr. Slinger that includes "Big, Fat, Mean, Mr. Stealing Teacher, Wanted by the FBI." Her anger emboldens her and she puts it in Mr. Slinger's book bag. On the way home Lilly discovers that Mr. Slinger has put a note (nice one) and a snack (tasty one) in her purple plastic purse. As her stomach lurches, she realizes her dilemma. How can she resolve it? Will Mr. Slinger forgive her? Must she become a dancer or a surgeon or an ambulance driver or a diva or a pilot or a hairdresser or a scuba diver INSTEAD of a teacher? You can find out if you hurry to the library and ask for *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*.

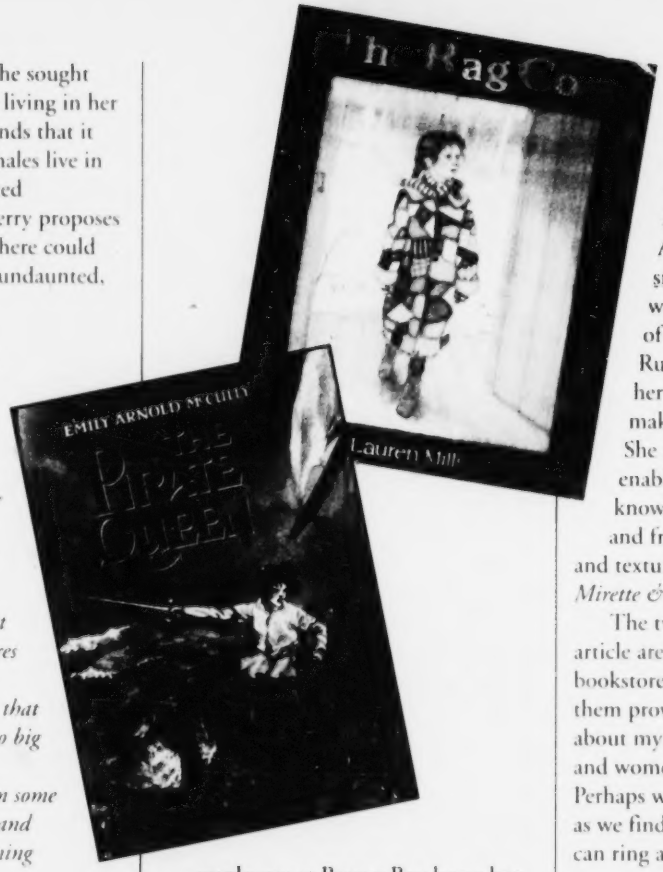
In Nantucket, Massachusetts on the tenth day of July in 1991, Emily wrote

a letter to Mr. Blueberry. She sought information about a whale living in her pond. Mr. Blueberry responds that it can't be a whale because whales live in salt water. Through a spirited correspondence Mr. Blueberry proposes scientific facts about why there could not be a whale and Emily, undaunted, pursues her belief.

Emily: *Do you think he might be lost?*
Mr. Blueberry: *Whales don't get lost, they always know where they are in the oceans.*
Emily: *What can I feed him with?*
Mr. Blueberry: *They eat tiny shrimp - like creatures that live in the sea. However, I must tell you that a Blue Whale is much too big to live in your pond.*
Emily: *I secretly took him some crunched-up corn flakes and bread crumbs. This morning they were all gone.*
Mr. Blueberry: *I must point out to you quite forcibly . . . you may not know that whales are migratory.*
Emily: *He has gone. I think your letter made sense to him and he has decided to be migratory again.*

While this may seem like the end, it is not. Emily surprises Mr. Blueberry with her letter about the welcome events that occur when she and Arthur (her whale) reunite at the beach. Emily's academic pursuits increase her knowledge of the environment.

Early on in *Martha Blah Blah* (1996), we know the reason for Martha's self esteem and her pursuit of language skills. "Martha was always a great communicator. But when she ate alphabet soup, the letters went up to her brain instead of down to her stomach, and Martha spoke words. Martha loved letters. She loved words. So Martha's family gave her a bowl of alphabet soup every day." Martha's family thought she was special, the employees at Burger Boy knew her and, of course, the neighborhood dogs depended on her. By all accounts, Martha's life promised to be an enviable one; lots of respect, lots of word play and lots to eat. Enter Granny Flo, the new owner of Granny's Soup Company who decides to downsize by putting fewer letters in each can of soup. With Martha's wit, determination and language skills, both the alphabet soup and her stature are restored.



With each success on the high wire with Bellini, Mirett's self-esteem rose. "In Milan, they sipped tea at a table high over the square. In Budapest, Mirette jumped through a paper hoop. In Vienna, she and Bellini walked from opposite ends of the wire and passes without touching." When they were invited to perform in St. Petersburg, Mirette found hunger and homelessness. Bellini decides to speak about freedom as he and Mirette step down from the wire. He is arrested and Mirette is thrown to the ground. No stranger to courage, she imagines a perilous strategy to free Bellini from his prison chamber. It is the Death Walk in which Mirette must walk up an inclined wire in absolute and total darkness. Also, she must carry with her a small hacksaw to cut the window bars. It is the concept of freedom for Bellini and Russia's people, in addition to her extraordinary skill, that makes possible this daring feat. She realizes that her unique gifts enable her to assist others. Her knowledge of hunger, homelessness and freedom take on a new depth and texture in McCull's 1997 *Starring Mirette & Bellini.*

The twenty books noted in this article are available in libraries and bookstores. Listening to and looking at them provide a springboard for talking about myriad issues surrounding girls and women in contemporary society. Perhaps we will raise as many questions as we find answers. Perhaps we, too, can ring a fire bell in the night.

JOAN MCMATH, PH.D., is in the Teacher Education department at Ohio University and specializes in reading and children and adolescent literature. She has a special interest in how teachers can use literature to bring children's lives into the classroom and to support the exploration of anti-bias curriculum.

A complete bibliography of the books noted in this article can be found in the Resource section at the back of this issue.

Creating a Kindergarten Community

BY TESSA LOGAN

In my kindergarten class during the first week of school, girls sat only with girls and boys only with boys, even though I knew at least one boy and one girl were best friends outside of school. Boys wouldn't set foot in the dramatic-play area, and girls never went to the block center. Some friendships were so interdependent that no one else could play with either one of the pair. Many children were afraid to play with certain children, either because they did not know them or because of negative judgments formed during their preschool years. My class was a very divided one.

Children learn best when they encounter new situations in a supportive environment. That was not the type of climate we had in my kindergarten classroom. This meant that I had to do something to create more heterogeneous groupings and less animosity among the children.

After that first week, I decided to help the children learn to expect the best-not the worst-from each other. I wanted them to break down barriers so that boys and girls could enjoy each other's company and expertise. I wanted them to open up established friendships so that other children could be included and new friendships could develop. I began to create opportunities for the children to gain new social experiences and still have access to their best friends.

Making new friends at home

At an early September meeting, I let the parents know of my observations and my conviction to change the atmosphere in our classroom. They agreed to help their children make new

friends by inviting children of the opposite gender and children other than best friends to their homes to play. As early as October, children excitedly reported to me that they were going to a classmate's house for the first time. Throughout the year I continued to find ways to encourage parents to invite a new friend to their house.

There were some surprising results from these changes in visitation patterns. For example, one young boy's difficult behavior was largely transformed by an afterschool visit to a classmate's home. He later told me that he had been very sad about none of the children inviting him to their homes. I then realized that this was part of the reason it was difficult for him to be friendly with other children at school. Having one-to-one friendship experiences with individuals in a group helps children feel a part of that group.

Forming classroom agreements

I set out to help the children make a set of classroom agreements that would ensure an atmosphere free of ridicule, threats, and exclusionary practices. In a meeting I asked the children, each in turn, "How do you like to be treated?" When all had answered, we agreed to treat each other "nice." During the first few months of school, we worked toward a full understanding of what we meant by nice and made specific agreements to reflect this understanding.

Early in the fall I did a presentation for the children called "I Am Loving and Capable" (in Judson 1977) and introduced the concept of "put-downs" and "put-ups." I taped a paper heart to my chest and explained that we are all born knowing that we are loving and capable of learning to do anything. Then I asked the children to tell me some things they had heard that made them *forget* that they are loving and capable — statements that made them feel bad or hurt or unimportant.

With some prompting and examples, the put-downs cascaded forth. "You're dumb!" "I don't like you!" "When Mom yells at me!" With each comment, I ripped off a piece of the heart and looked sadder and sadder and smaller and smaller. I explained that put-downs can stop our ability to think and act our best.

Then I told them about put-ups. Real appreciation can help people get the "I Am Loving and Capable" feeling back. As the children showered me with put-ups ("I love you!" "You draw good!"), I dramatically taped the heart back together and sat up taller and taller and looked happier and happier. Of course, after that, we agreed to avoid doing put-downs and to do put-ups, appreciating each other and each other's

work whenever we could.

Then I tried something I had never done before. Through my many years of teaching, I had always felt uneasy about small groups of children purposely excluding other children from their play. Exclusions, I had observed, are often motivated by assumptions about particular students, not by anything related to the specific requirements of the play or project.

Paley (1992) offers a strong rationale for expecting children to learn to include each other in all of their play. School is not the place for clinging to private friendships but rather a place to explore social situations and grow new ideas.

I explored with the children how they felt when they were left out and whether or not they thought it was fair for some children to be told no and others yes in answer to their requests to play. We decided that telling someone she could not play was a type of put-down. We agreed that anyone who wanted to play at school would be allowed to do so, unless that child was treating people or materials badly and would not stop when asked.

I agreed to help children figure out how to include new members in their play and to help those who had trouble playing well with others. I also assured the children that if they wanted time alone with someone else, I would help them arrange that with their parents for after school. These principles and understandings form what we call our *Include Everyone* agreement.

Toys from home often become the focus of exclusive behaviors in preschool classrooms. Early in the year, some children brought in a toy and determined who could and who could not play with it. Others pointed out that this was not including everyone and was not nice. After discussion we decided that we could all bring things into the room and either let everyone or no one play with them. This agreement, really an extension of the *Include Everyone* agreement, prevents the use of objects from home to bribe alliances or bond some children against others. At the same time, allowing children to bring toys from home and encouraging them to share the toys with everyone provides a way for some children to make new friends.

Late in the fall, two children had a conflict during a dramatic play activity on the playground. One maintained that he *was* Superman, while the other very angrily said that he was *not*. After listening to them and other children in a group discussion, we agreed that we could pretend whatever we wanted to pretend. This was a version of a larger idea that we later agreed upon: *We Can All Have Our Own Ideas.*

The children seemed to find our inclusion agreements very satisfying. It is easy for them to state the rules as reminders to each other whenever they feel it is necessary. And most of the time, it is equally easy for someone, once reminded, to change behavior in midstream. *Include Everyone* and *We Can All Have Our Own Ideas* are self-monitoring guides for the children as they interact with each other in the classroom. Some parents reported that our classroom agreements are used as problem solving tools at home as well.

Taking turns

Turn taking is traditionally a major part of the kindergarten curriculum. To help my class with turn taking, we use wooden sticks with each child's name written on one of them. Whenever we determine that we need to take turns, we shake the can of sticks with our eyes closed. The first name we pick is the next person to get a turn.

Fairness is deeply important to young children, and my children greet this particular fairness technique like a long-awaited answer from heaven. They insist that not even I have the right to "just choose" people, and they are quite consistent in their use of the name sticks for their own purposes. They love to play with them, read them, count them, make their own set, and so forth. Whenever they bring in materials to share, they set up a learning center and draw sticks to give everybody a turn.

Teacher-assigned grouping

Despite the dedication to name sticks in my classroom for both group and individual turn taking, for particular tasks I occasionally assign groups that mix the children in special ways. I do this in a variety of ways and

am careful not to be seen as "just picking people." One technique that works well for special activities is to ask children for three names of classmates they would like to be with, including one "new friend," with the promise that they would get to be with at least one of their choices. I occasionally assign children to groups of three, one of one gender and two of the other. Many times I pair "less than best friends" together to encourage the development of that friendship. If the activity itself is exciting, I never hear any objections to my groupings. I often hear a child report, in a pleased voice, "I'm getting to know him now. He talked to me!"

Conflict management

I have found that classroom communities cannot thrive if they do not have some procedures for managing conflict. People in any community must understand that conflict is manageable. To do this, they need to have some experience with observing or participating in real (not role-playing) conflicting resolution events. Even when a conflict is *not* resolved but is managed thoughtfully and with respect and caring for all parties, the experience helps build the faith needed to face the next conflict.

Throughout the first four months of school, we worked on what to do when we were angry. The children had already agreed not to hit, throw things, or do put-downs, but we had to work on acceptable alternatives. I used many of the ideas in Schmeiding and Logan (1983) and Wickert (1989) to help us get started. We had several group meetings to tackle the question of how to be nice and still feel angry. I used stuffed animals to act out role plays, illustrating what happens, for instance, when somebody accidentally bumps another person. We read books and sang songs about conflict and friendship. Finally, we agreed to tell people how we feel and what we want, especially to tell them to stop if they are doing something to us that we do not like.

If children have a conflict and appear to need assistance, I move close to them, listen to each in turn, and help them talk and listen to each other. I often suggest that they tell the other person what they want, either now or for the next time. The act of talking, or expressing feelings, and listening is enough to resolve the situation. Sometimes children need reminders from me about our agreements. If children are unable to change their behavior, I require that they change activities.

There are still times when children get so angry they yell or hit or scratch. Sometimes this anger is directed at me, particularly if I interrupt one angry child's focus on another child. If I can find a way to interrupt the outburst firmly and reach out tenderly, offering the child a safe pair of arms, he will often collapse and cry heavily. Crying with my attention often serves to relieve whatever tension caused the child to act thoughtlessly. If I am unavailable, I ask other children to sit near him while he finishes crying. At times a child is upset with me for reasons that are quite justified, and I apologize. We expect the teacher as well as the children to follow the agreements.

A significant part of our conflict-management agreement is to get help when we need it. I encourage, remind, and insist that the children get help when they are unable to stop someone from doing something to them or their materials that they do not like. This takes a lot of repetition because many children are not in the habit of getting help, in part, I believe, because they do not realize that their problems are important. I reassure them that getting help when you need it is not *tattling*, a word that many children experience as a put-down before they enter kindergarten. This means that I have to listen when a child complains about something, even if I don't feel like it.

Wickert (1989) states that a teacher must clarify his or her values and develop strong convictions about them to make conflict management work in the classroom. My insistence that the children get help communicates to them my conviction about our agreements and my certainty that their problems are worth attention. My consistency in this expectation, I believe, strengthens the developing sense of trust and worth in each individual, thereby strengthening the total community.

I often use the conflict itself to help the children remember how to manage a conflict. When children come to me with a complaint, I listen and then ask if they told the person to stop. If the answer is no, I coach them to tell the person to stop. If the answer is yes, I praise them and ask, "And did they stop?" If the answer is yes again, I congratulate them on their success. If their attempts at stopping someone from hurting them are unsuccessful, I praise them for remembering to get help and go with them to help mend the situation. In this way, I foster the children's independence in altering situations that they find hurtful, while offering support when they need it.

Gender bias

In addition to conflict management and general inclusion, we also work on gender bias. I make certain that baseball hats and duffle bags are in the dramatic-play center along with flowery hats and purses. I encourage girls and boys

together to build things to be used with their toys from home. I check books for representations of boys and girls before I bring them into the classroom. I interrupt any attempts to define areas of play or seating as belonging to boys or girls. I do not divide the children by boys and girls or address them as "boys and girls." We read books that address the issue.

Community-building activities

To give our fledgling community more experiences, I introduce games that encourage whole class cooperation. For example, the physical education teacher and I set up P.E. and recess times when the children are encouraged to "gang up" on us. Children often view adults as all powerful, especially physically. Playful encounters with light-hearted adults who don't mind being "overpowered" occasionally can help children with this sense of powerlessness. We challenge children to work in teams to get one of us down on the mat. Our job is to present the combination of challenge and encouragement to each group. In Freeze Tag all of the children work together to trick us or escape from us. In kickball all of the children line up to kick and run the bases while we pitch. We encourage the children to cheer for each other. All of these games require the children to cooperate as a group to overcome an obstacle. The adults' presence as playful friends, challenging and encouraging at the same time, makes it possible for more children to participate fully in these games.

Preparing projects to present to the outside world also helps the children turn their attention to working together. We did a presentation for the parents in the winter and spring and prepared a dinosaur museum for them as well. In all of the preparations for the parent audiences, teams of children helped each other with materials and costumes, measuring, drawing, and writing.

Other things I do with our class include making a name chart for the children to use to learn to read and write each other's names. This chart encourages them to see themselves as belonging to a definitive group. I also make use of absences to provide opportunities for other children to form new alliances within the group. If a child with challenging behavior is absent, for example, I use some meeting times to help support the children who have repeated difficulty figuring out how to respond to these behaviors. I let the children talk about their frustrations, help them to empathize with the absent child, and encourage them to come up with agreements about how we could help each other cope.

Finally, I make sure that our community includes parents, one-time visitors, as well as regulars. We have parent presenters on topics related to our theme, field trip "families" with parents as heads, parents as weekly instructors, and parents as parents coming to be with their children. All are invited and encouraged by me individually.

The developing community

So, what's it like now in our classroom? It is springtime and a girl is holding a boy on her lap for storytime. During a transition time a girl rolls and tumbles on the carpet with a boy. Girls and boys both use the dramatic-play center (one boy was a mother kitty) and block center, often on projects that they design together. Two of the most cautious girls in our class came up to me several months ago and shared that they had told another girl that boys were just as nice to play with as girls. Our spontaneously produced plays almost always include girls and boys on the same show.

New friendships have formed, some of them new best friendships, most of them additional friendships, and many of them cross-gender. Previous best friends are still best friends. And, in the flexibility that relationships have taken in our room, best friends still get some time together to be best friends, as well as some time to share new ideas with new people.

An assumption of democracy has asserted itself in the room. The children expect our agreements to be upheld, and they remind each other of them when necessary. Sometimes we have three or four children abreast in line because they want to hold each other's hands and include everyone. The hall is big enough and we are a small group (15), so it's worth the occasional unwieldy quality of the line.

Of course, we still deal with actions of exclusion and feelings of being left out or unfairly treated. Two of my children continue to struggle with issues about being best friends, trying to get one person to play with them exclusively all day. Some children still comment that a toy they brought will not be desired by someone else because they are a boy or girl. But they always offer it anyway and are often surprised by the positive response. One child even brought in a combination of Barbies and trucks so "there would be something for the boys and something for the girls." She's shaping an inclusive practice out of society's divisive messages.

There is still much work to be done. In dealing with children's biases, I want to explore an approach set forward by Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force (1989). These authors encourage teachers to pursue children's perceptions of differences, to talk about what it is they think, to lay limits for behaviors in the class. They call this teaching to prevent pre-prejudicial attitudes from developing into full prejudices. In the past I avoided listening to children explain their perceptions and differences between races and sexes, thinking that if we did not speak about our assumed differences, the focus on differences would dissolve. But now I would like to listen more to what it is the children think, so that I can use this information as a bridge to deeper understandings for us all. This is no different from what I do when I teach reading, writing, or math; I use children's present perceptions to help me design their next challenges and expose mistaken assumptions.

In summary, the issues of sexism and exclusion are still with us. That cannot change until the society at large changes. But the practice of

divisive behaviors has lessened a great deal in my classroom. The atmosphere of the group is one of caring attachments. The children send out letters when people are sick. They ask after absent children. They raise a cheer when their classmates return. Their arms go around people who are hurt. And their put-ups fly when I draw because the children know I find drawing difficult. Our classroom is a *nice* place to be.

Tessa Logan (1949-1997), left, taught kindergarten at River Valley Community School in Athens, Ohio, for 15 years. An advocate for children and parents, Tessa taught and wrote about conflict resolution and emotion in the classroom and helped form the Institute for Democracy in Education.

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reflection

UNFOLDING WHAT IT MEANS TO CARE:

One Girl's Middle School Experience

BY BARBARA WAXMAN AND LIZ YOUNG

When I asked my daughter, Liz, to write about her experiences in middle school for this article, she said, "'I don't want to wallow in pain, Mom. Can I make it funny?" Recently, she also announced that she is working on developing her character. Alas, her middle school experience has unwittingly helped to forge a piece of character development, through defenses built around the avoidance of painful memories, through not trusting her teachers, through the pervasive experience that she cannot say what she believes to be true.

These painful events took place in 7th grade and bear close scrutiny for the questions they raise about the limitations of ascribing all behavior and personality attributes to psychological development and individual responsibility; they speak to the need to view even seemingly individual issues through the perspective of gender. These events also wistfully evoke what it might mean to have an educative experience, one that is truly democratic, that resonates with trust and understanding, that allows voice, even the small voice of an undersized girl to be heard loud and clear. For these events also illuminate the ways in which girls are silenced.

Gilligan and her colleagues (1977, 1982, 1990) emphasize the role that caring and relationships play in the psychology of young adolescent girls. In this narrative, caring becomes a double-edged sword, one that serves to control as well as to connect.

The setting is a small, private middle school in the Northwest. The school was chosen because it was small, the curriculum was touted for its integrated themes, authentic projects and service, and for accepting children where they were developmentally, and helping them grow. The administration explicitly stated that while children do not begin middle school as responsible, independent, and organized students, they do graduate that way. The school day is organized around a block of time for independent work, check-ins with teachers, and writing and math workshops.

Sixth grade had been difficult for my daughter. Liz had been thrust into a peer group concerned with early adolescent issues when she herself was probably more involved with latency issues. She had trouble getting all her work done and felt alienated and often bored. She was jazzed, however, by a project on cleaning up a watershed. A teacher left mid-year, and she became close to his replacement; he seemed to understand her and know how to motivate her to tackle tasks she was not enthused about. Without a word of explanation this teacher did not return in the Fall. Not knowing why this teacher left bothered Liz and she wanted an answer, wanted the situation acknowledged. When she raised the issue at a conference, she was told, "Well, no one else has been asking." Liz piped up, "Oh, yes they have —o we've discussed it at lunch."

In 7th grade, she felt mercilessly teased and out of it. And, she was not allowed to participate in the continuing group project on the watershed because she had not gotten all her work done in a timely fashion the year before. Second quarter, she wrote a skit on the role of women in the middle ages and got some 8th grade girls to help. She was excited, motivated, worked hard, and mounted a successful performance. Third quarter, she was not allowed to do another play for a history project and became increasingly bored and frustrated. She had also begun studying in earnest for her Bat Mitzvah, for the first time making a regular habit of study. I began a job that involved some travel, and spoke to her advisor about how a Bat Mitzvah study and my absences would be stressful for Liz, and requested that she please get in touch if there was any trouble. We received her mid-year report which was enthusiastic about her progress, but had no other contact until we walked into the spring conference.

There were two teachers at the conference and Liz was to present her work and her reflections on that work from the last quarter. She was sullen and didn't want to read her reflections or her

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descriptions of work done. Her teachers did not wait long before they launched into a description of how Liz did not care about her work, had repudiated their help, was sullen and resentful and angry. They did not respond to any of Liz' comments about what she was angry about, and would not let me redirect the conference. I repeatedly attempted to say, "Second quarter worked well for Liz; let's look at what was successful about that quarter so that we can turn things around here." I wanted to know why I was not informed before this conference, as I had specifically requested, that if things went downhill I wanted to be notified immediately. The teachers disregarded my comments, and stared accusingly at Liz. They found a few different ways to say, "Liz, we tried to help you and you kept shrugging us off. You're just not caring about your work."

Taking Liz' perspective, I could see why she was angry — the work seemed like an endless slog, and there was nothing to engage, leaven, motivate. She was passionate about drama, especially as a way to represent what she was coming to understand about history, but she wasn't allowed to do another skit. She was newly critical and able to step back and reflect on how she was being schooled, and there was much fodder for this newly honed critical perspective. She wanted to know why last year's teacher had left; she wanted to know why literature and history and writing and spelling and vocabulary were not integrated as promised; she thought the algebra book was inane and confusing. And she wanted help with the social dramas that whirled around her.

I could also take the teachers' perspective — how unrewarding to try and work with a student who clearly has academic promise, only to be rejected time and again. How frustrating not to be able to connect, to see the hoped-for trajectory of progress reverse course. Watching these very angry teachers glare, it seemed that Liz' rejection of help was the most egregious of infractions. Not getting work done is serious, but tolerated with an admonishment to work harder. Not doing well is met with a plan to enlist more aid. Had Liz been contrite, dependent, and uncritical, would these teachers have been so angry? Would her critical comments have been tolerated if she had been male? When I picture her a foot taller and male, I imagine that her questions and anger would be met with rigidity, but not with anger. I do not think there would have been the same use of notions of 'care' so skillfully exploited as a means of control.

Had Liz been contrite, dependent, and uncritical, would these teachers have been so angry? Would her critical comments have been tolerated if she had been male?

Among these three agendas (Liz', mine, and the teachers'), the teachers' held sway. They were intent on letting Liz know how disappointed they were, how rejected they felt, and wanted to know what she was going to do about taking responsibility. They ended the conference by saying Liz could not be in the school's production of Macbeth. Liz sank lower and lower in her seat and finally could say nothing. Here is her description:

I had been really bored third quarter. The work I was assigned did not interest me. When I was bored I didn't want to work so I wasted my time reading. My teachers tried to help me, but I didn't want their help. They wouldn't let me do a play for history again, so I was angry. At the conference, my teachers ganged up on me because they were mad at me. They were mad because I didn't want their help. I didn't want their help because I felt so alienated — from them and from the other students. I thought they were just plain mean to me. I was still mad about the teacher that just disappeared last Spring. I was mad that all the teachers just kept leaving. At the Spring parent and student conference, I was trying to tell them about all the stuff I was pissed about. It wasn't really an integrated curriculum as I has been promised; I wasn't allowed to interpret history dramatically, and they were not even attempting to help me with my social situation. They turned on me. They didn't listen to me. I'm not here to analyze their thoughts, but it felt dreadful not to be listened to. Then I asked about being in the Shakespeare play. They said, "We don't want you to be in the play this year because you did not get your work done." I was stunned. They weren't even honest enough to say they were punishing me because I had spurned their help and acted like I didn't care. They knew how much I loved acting. Not being allowed to be in the play left me completely furious. I felt like someone had stolen my soul. When the play rehearsals started, it was positively wretched. The worst of the blows was when my only friend in the school that year got the lead role. Right then and there I decided to do everything I could to participate in the play without acting. I wanted to be a part of it. I made sets, I helped my friend with her lines, and I did anything I could think of to help, including selling tickets. When I heard that the girl playing one of the main characters had not memorized all her lines, I knew that I would have — I would have had no trouble working hard on a play. When I went to see the performance it just about killed me to not be on stage.

Before the play was performed, I had to go to another conference about my behavior. A play rehearsal was going on as we met. Everyone at the table was staring at me — three teachers and the director of the school. I tried to tell them that not being allowed to be in the play was the wrong punishment for me, that it was taking away the one thing I loved best, the

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thing that was most meaningful to me, that it was just making me so resentful and angry. Before I could even finish saying the thought the director interrupted and said doing the play was a privilege that I had not earned because I had not been responsible about getting my work done on time. Then she said that instead of not allowing me to be in the play they could have simply given me bad grades and a bad recommendation for high school next year. I felt so threatened. They kept accusing me of not caring. Finally, my mother pointed at me and said, "Look at her. Does this look like the picture of someone who doesn't care? Can't you see how deeply she cares? She's miserable!"

As Liz and I recounted these events I was struck by the unspoken taboos. It was somehow not kosher to care so much about drama. What would happen if she had been given full rein to explore her dramatic bent? What would have been sacrificed and what would have been gained? They took away the one thing that she was most fervent about, reminding me of the classic story by Ray Bradbury, *The Golden Apples of the Sun*, in which a young girl, passionate about the sun, is deprived of witnessing its once in many years appearance. Note here that the teachers used what Liz cared about the most as a means of control, and to punish her for not caring.

Caring about one's relationships is supposedly the hallmark of young girls' psychology. Did Liz violate these stereotyped notions of caring? Or was it that she was not invested in pleasing these authority figures? A hallmark of younger, pre-adolescent girls is that they are resisters (Gilligan, 1990). Perhaps it was Liz' resistance, typically found at slightly younger ages, that was so taboo. However, there is another layer here: The teachers seemed willfully to misinterpret Liz' behavior as not caring. A more accurate interpretation, and the one offered by Liz herself, is that she was angry and alienated. And anger reveals caring; we are rarely angry about what we don't care about. Misinterpreting an adolescent girl's behavior and

Does this experience of being silenced, despite my age, profession, and expertise, merely mirror my daughter's experience?

motivation yields another form of control. Perhaps it was that Liz cared so much — about the teacher who left, about pursuing her studies in a way that made sense to her, that threatened these teachers. It may well be that Liz' social isolation and marginalization allowed her to see and resist, but it was the form and content of her caring that seemed to antagonize.

The other taboo was speaking the truth as one knows it. According to Gilligan (1990), twelve year olds can be quite honest and frank. Liz' frankness about her disappointment with the school called into question the teachers' sense of their mission. Her raising issues such as what happened to the teacher who left was met with time-honored silencing of simply not responding to the question, much as Gilligan interprets Prospero's non-response to Miranda's questions at the beginning of *The Tempest*. Liz' experiences of not being heard, of being alone (or blamed) with peer issues, and of being deprived of what she most cared about by teachers professing to care about her, led to an excruciating sense of betrayal, *of not truly being cared about*. Liz, for her part, challenged authority and expectations. The big taboo was that she did not play her part as was expected.

I wonder about my own role in these events; the ways in which I silenced myself, the ways in which I felt helpless to change or successfully confront the school's perspective and behavior. Does this experience of being silenced, despite my age, profession, and expertise, merely mirror my daughter's experience? Or does it attest to the powerful needs and forces of the school's self-protective system? At home, and during the conferences, I encouraged Liz to speak her mind (politely, respectfully, but forcefully). I still felt complicit, a witness to injustice. I had a long conversation with the director and let her know that depriving a child of her passions (to work on the watershed project, to do drama) is not educative. I said that it would be great if they could trust their curriculum to bring students along on the dimensions of responsibility and independence they so valued. I further emphasized that for a child who had low social status, the play would have been a way for her peers to see her in a new light. But I did not directly confront the issue of silencing.

In this narrative, the mechanisms for silencing seem to be the usual ones: authority, expectations, and control. The teachers attempted to control Liz' behavior, her curriculum, her grades, and information (e.g., why the teacher left). However, each of these mechanisms pivoted on various notions of caring and not caring. Given the role of caring in adolescent female development, we would do well to explore further how caring is also used for control.

It's over a year now, and Liz went on to have a fairly successful 8th grade year although she did not become close to any of the teachers and did not pour herself into her work. At times, she ran into trouble. She was doing a history paper on a not well-known Queen of Alexandria. She could not find the requisite number of references and posed several good questions: Who gets written up for history? Why is there so much material on certain figures and almost none on others? Could one write up the scant material in an imaginative way and thereby fill in the gaps?' The questions went unheeded, and not

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having enough references was seen as her fault. She found friends who were kindred spirits, she did her work more or less on time, and she got to be in the play this year (she did a smashing job). During the intense time of rehearsals and performances she remarked that she thought being in the play raised her social status in school. And before graduation, a group of students who had made her life hell apologized to her for their behavior and said that they had just recently come to understand what a neat kid she is.

Is all well that ends well? Liz still shudders at these memories, and, despite many conversations, persists in thinking she brought the horrible times on herself. I worry that her raw, critical spirit has turned away from the world (school, society) and has turned inward instead. I wonder how things might have turned out if it was okay to possess a critical voice, to have passions, to care so deeply about connections that you think twice before you forge them.

Barbara Waxman, Ph.D. is a developmental psychologist and an educational consultant with Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound. **Elizabeth Young** is a student at The Northwest School in Seattle and is happy to have put middle school behind her.

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EPITOME

by Janelle Vanessa Horton

Even as a child -
In her hands she holds the world.
She is the African-American Girl.
Growing up she is full of wonder.
She is always the center of fun.
Her smile lights up the room . . .
She is the young, black woman.
Her style and grace are unquestionable.
She is genuine, never shady.
Her elegance is the envy of all women . . .
Oh yes . . .She is the Ebony Lady.
She's oh so fly, Oh so cool.
Any man is proud to be her mister.
She is strong and bold by nature . . .
She is the mature, Nubian sister.
Her heart is full of gold.
She is determined never to fail.
Her charm and wit are real . . .
She is the Chocolate Female.
She ages gracefully and beautifully.
She wears her gray like the crown of a King.
She is wise beyond her years . . .
She is the Black Queen.
Her beauty and radiance is unsurpassed
She draws attention like a flame draws a moth
It is true to this day as it was in the beginning . . .
When God made her, He was just showing off.

Janelle V. Horton is a senior at Ohio University where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Education degree with an emphasis in Elementary Education. Janelle is 21 and originates from Cleveland, Ohio.

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A Heavy Burden for Feminist of the Year

BY CRAIG SEGAL

First quarter. Gender Studies. Fortunately, it is still warm enough to take our annual field trip to the 'Women and Children First' bookstore. Chicago's autumn is not always so cooperative. On a whim, I decided this year to identify one student for the prestigious 'Feminist of the Year' award. Choosing a winner was tough, but, after careful deliberation, I chose Sonia (not actual name of student). Spunky Sonia — with her pigtails, wiry legs and nervous energy, always leaving her seat in search of a more strategic vantage point; her hand always raised high pleading to be called on.

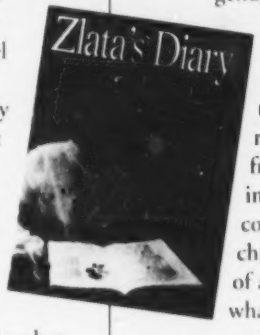
She won for many reasons. But mostly I admired her enthusiasm, especially during class discussions. She exhibited a great deal of maturity through her ideas and her poise. Ironically, her appearance amidst classmates of quicker physical development, was that of a little girl. She was full of innocence and promise.

The day I announced the winner, I was hoping that the gift I ordered would fit her small frame. She opened the wrapping paper eagerly, yet somehow remembered to read the card first. In her nervous accented English she shared: "This award goes to you, Sonia, for excellence throughout this thematic unit on Gender Studies. You are a powerful voice who will one day force an end to the injustices and inequalities that infest our society." I later regretted placing such a heavy burden on such fragile shoulders.

As she tore through the wrapping paper, I was reminded of her accomplishments during the unit: her research into the injustices found in the work force, her reading response journal entries from books like *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret*, her comments during our conversations in class about stereotypes, scapegoating, homophobia, tomboys, discussions concerning the slanted division of chores in our households, our class field trip to a local feminist bookstore, the statistics we analyzed, the exploration of our own fears, limits and biases.

The gift may have been rather anticlimactic — a T-shirt with the message, '*Someday a Woman Will Be President*' printed across it. But for Sonia it was a badge of honor. She wore it often to school. Her classmates did not tease her; they were congratulatory. She was a feminist, a fighter, and everyone acknowledged that she deserved the distinction.

This was first quarter. During the second quarter we continued exploring issues of social justice. Our new theme was 'War and Peace.' This unit overlapped with gender, touching themes such as 'patriarchy' and 'machismo.' Sonia was equally engaged showing the same level of concern for the mistreated and exploited. On a cold snowy day, we listened to a Holocaust survivor tell us his story; we studied WW II and Hiroshima; we read first hand accounts of young women in war in *The Diary of Anne Frank, Letters of a Slave Girl*, and *Zlata's Diary*. Sonia never lost her characteristic sparkle.



Third quarter. Report card pick-up. Sonia's mother came to pick up the grades as she had the previous reporting period. Sonia's father had passed away some time prior and I had never met her step-father. After our short parent-teacher conference, I discovered that I never would meet Sonia's step-father—not legally anyway. Her mother told me that she had just placed an order of protection against him. Sonia's step-father had been abusing her. Sonia's mother pleaded with me to make sure that her daughter never be released to him at time of dismissal. I was planning on mentioning to her that in the last few days Sonia had been acting a bit unusual, but I realized that it was no longer necessary to bring it up. Although she was too resilient to let her grades slip, I had noticed her becoming quite removed; a new look of driven determination replaced the glimmer of optimism that used to shine in her eyes.

A female colleague who had spoken to the parent in greater detail confirmed that the abuse was sexual. I was devastated. At that moment it occurred to me how easy it was to teach these gender issues to my students, how effortless it was to photocopy newspaper articles, how easy it was to play Maya Angelou recordings, to read aloud from Sandra Cisneros, to invite speakers. But how could I help this young child, or any such recipient of abuse, make sense out of what had happened to her?

Naturally, I made sure that the necessary teachers were informed of this tragedy. I then sent home a note to Sonia's mother, not divulging that I knew more than what

she had shared with me, offering the phone number of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago. I thought she should know that she could probably qualify for free legal counseling and that there were Spanish speaking attorneys who could help her. This letter was very difficult to write. I wasn't sure if she would appreciate this effort, or if she would be put off by my meddling.

The role of the teacher is a slippery one. Would she, or would any parent think that our involvement with students should be limited to their academic progress? As teachers, we cannot ignore or merely pass along students who bring outside problems into the classroom. We cannot blindly go about our school day, satisfied that we carried out our lesson plans while our students' private lives will inevitably enter the classroom. Sonia's situation was revealed independent of a lesson. However, educators delving into studies of gender, race, or any social issue must be cognizant that we are opening the door to personal reflections and explorations. Once we make this invitation, we need to be aware that our goals become distinct from the teaching of grammar, geography, or times tables.

Lest we think this is an isolated case, Sonia's story was the second time this year that a mother had come to me warning of the dangers of a young girl's father. In an earlier situation, a mother implored me never to give anybody her phone number or address, and never to let another person meet with her daughter in school or take her home. At present, a minimum of two girls in just my homeroom class of eighteen fear their fathers. A third grade girl breaks down about once a week from the pressure of her parents' fighting — the most recent outburst occurred when she was invited to present an original poem that tapped into her personal life.

Gender Studies is designed to make my students sensitive to gender issues, but is this enough? Does a heightened awareness protect these children from our unjust society? For any student, is there relief in knowing that what is happening to one's family also occurs to others? Is there any comfort in seeing films or reading books about others who suffer such abuse? I wonder if all my lessons, surveys, questionnaires, discussion topics, resources, and field trips are futile when so many girls have to return home each day and become at risk to the ones most entrusted with their well being. Maybe I should modify my awards to be more consistent with the reality of my sixth graders' lives: 'Survivor of the Year?'

Fourth quarter. The snow has thawed and the stress from standardized tests fills the classroom. Sonia has taken a sudden interest in caring for the three classroom plants. She removes the discolored, crunchy leaves and waters them a couple times a day . . . more if I would let her. I'm certain that an expert could eloquently interpret her nurturing impulses — perhaps a need to see the vulnerable and dependent cared for properly. She has also taken it upon herself to organize the chaotic mountains of folders and lessons piled up on the radiator. Among the many items she dredged up from one cleaning spurt was a photograph of an invited speaker from DePaul University who came to speak to us on the relationship between language and gender bias.

I remember how bashful Sonia and her classmates were when the professor wrote all the names the class could come up with that society uses to refer to females. She accepted all of them, no matter how vulgar or profane. My students realized how women are so often compared to things we devour or to animals. She asked why our language lacks a pure, untainted female counterpart to 'sir' or 'gentleman.' She also helped the class notice how women are used as means through which men are insulted, e.g., 'son-of-a- ' or 'mother- .' Actually I'm not sure which half of my class our guest was targeting most. After all, I don't think that for the young women in the class, this lesson was news to them. For 'No TV Week' (a school-wide activity held earlier in the year), we had already spent considerable class discussion time exposing the sexism on television. Or perhaps she was speaking more to the boys as a deterrent for the next generation of students who at best may leave sexual and gender discrimination unchallenged, and at worst, becomes abusers themselves.

Admittedly, as a teacher, I also approach these lessons with a degree of trepidation. We invite private lives into the classroom and cannot always be certain of the results. But the possibility of undoing the sexist conditioning in just one person justifies the time and effort. Alternatively, avoiding the issue might mean a missed opportunity to empower a student such as Sonia. I have wondered if our studies may have played a role in hastening the end of Sonia's abuse. I have hope that it does.

It's May here and everything is in bloom in Chicago. It's 'Performance Quarter.' Our projects include composing original songs to perform, memorizing monologues to recite, and arranging our poetry anthologies. For reading workshop, we are studying adolescent culture, which is integrated with the 'Family Life' unit taught in science. I feel satisfied with the progress we've made in the areas of social justice. Many private stories have spilled into the classroom throughout the year. And thanks to these student contributions, we grew, we solved problems, we learned about life. I'm proud of our young activists. But I'm nagged by wonder at what the summer holds for the '1998 Feminist of the Year.' In the meantime, I'm sure that Sonia's desk will be tidy and her plants watered daily.

Craig Segal teaches sixth grade reading and written composition at the Inter-American School, a dual language public school on Chicago's near north side. He recently received a Golden Apple Award for outstanding teaching in the Chicago area.

Lost Innocence in a Heteronormative World

BY **REMIE L. CALALANG**

Author's note: *The story you are about to read is the beginning of my 10-year process of becoming a lesbian. I learned about gender when I became conscious of my own desires for other girls. Although issues of sexualities and genders are separate, the links become apparent in my story. In our heteronormative world we are taught what are appropriate desires. Clearly the issue at hand are pervasive and [illegible] throughout all aspects of [illegible] what are we supposed to do? How [illegible] educators, efficiently address the heteronormativity embedded within school and institutions? Awareness is a critical piece in all of this. Be aware of how words, questions, actions, readings and activities affect students, especially those students who may be exploring their own identities in very radical ways. If you were my seventh grade teacher and I came to you with the story below, how would you respond?*

I found out about being a girl in the seventh grade. Despite my fairly obvious physical characteristics, the occasional mandated dress, and the gendered pronouns people used to talk about me, I did not really think of myself as a girl. My girl-ness had yet to become conscious acts of identity. I don't remember anyone telling me that boys and girls behaved in distinctly different ways. I played baseball with my brothers, I played dolls with my sister, I wore flowery outfits and jeans, I helped my dad with the car and I helped my mom with the dishes. Oblivious to the distinctions between males and females, I just assumed that I could do anything — hat was until I was twelve-years-old. Although I always knew I was female, I lacked a complete understanding of the social behaviors expected of me as a girl. Not until I had my first crush on another girl in my seventh grade class did I realize the limits of female-female relationships. I could not have everything my little heart desired.

When I was in seventh grade the two middle schools within our district were combined into one. The middle school I had attended was the smaller of the two so in my seventh grade class I knew only four other students from my previous school. My transition into this new school and situation was eased by the kindness of one of the 'popular' girls, Toni (with an 'i'). Although she had her own set of friends with whom she grew up, none of them were in our class so it was pretty easy for us to learn about each other and become friends. Toni had light brown hair, blonder in the summer and darker in the winter, styled in a typical 80's punk cut — short on top and longer in the back. She was tall for seventh grade, athletic looking, and had a wonderful smile. I don't remember much about our time together except that we laughed a lot. When she laughed her smile would reach up to her dark blue eyes and crinkle the skin around them. Eventually we developed a small group of friends within our class, but Toni always remained the person I preferred to partner with for class projects and the one I looked for when I entered homeroom.

As seventh grade drew to a close I wanted to have some photos as reminders of my seventh grade year. After a long lecture about responsibility and carefulness, my parents were willing to hand over the camera for my unsupervised use at school and on field trips. I used two rolls of 24-exposure film over a period of one week, a bit excessive in my parents' eyes and barely enough by my standards. A bunch of us had cameras so we spent a lot of time taking pictures of each other being silly. As the last week of school loomed closer I waited impatiently for the Kodak person to develop my precious film in the little orange hut set in the middle on the parking lot at the mall. With only four days of school left they finally

telephoned me to pick up my pictures. I flipped through all the photos carefully checking for color, balance and action. I was quite pleased with myself because they had all come out nicely. I spent much time writing the names and some comments on the backs of the pictures so I would be able to recapture the flavor of our good times together in seventh grade. I was sure that I would always want to cherish these moments.

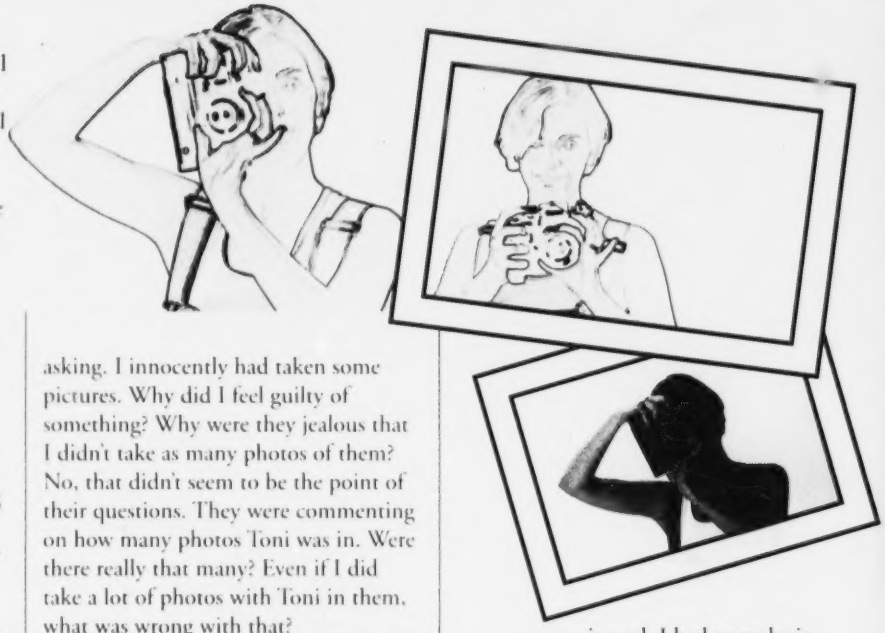
Running into homeroom with the pictures tucked into my notebook, my excitement was clearly visible to Toni and the rest of the group. Unfortunately, the homeroom bell rang just as I sat down so we all had to take our seats, mine in the back right corner and Toni's on the other side of the room. Unable to contain my joy in taking these photos I snuck them to my friend Meg who sat in front of me. She then passed them to Becky and so on. Before the photos could make their way to Toni we had to move onto assembly and then some other task. Sharing the photos with Toni would have to wait until lunch time. Walking to the auditorium I asked my friends who looked at the photos what they thought about them. Everyone agreed how funny certain ones were and how weird some of the boys were based on their antics in the pictures. And then someone asked the fateful question.

"Why are there so many pictures of Toni? I mean, there are more photos of her than of me or anyone else," my inquisitive friend pointed out.

"What are you talking about?" I responded nervously. My internal thoughts started to whir and trip over themselves. How did I not notice there were a lot of photos of Toni? Were there really that many photos of her? What did my friends mean by asking this question?

"If you count how many photos there are of her alone and in groups you'll see there are a lot of her in there. You took a lot of photos of Toni," another friend chimed in.

At this point I started to feel uneasy. I couldn't make sense of what they were asking. I innocently had taken some pictures. Why did I feel guilty of something? Why were they jealous that I didn't take as many photos of them? No, that didn't seem to be the point of their questions. They were commenting on how many photos Toni was in. Were there really that many? Even if I did take a lot of photos with Toni in them, what was wrong with that?



"I didn't really notice that I took that many photos with Toni in them. I'll have to look at them again," I answered meekly. After a few more moments I finally came up with an acceptable answer.

"Oh, you know what? I think I needed to use up the film so that I could get the film developed in time to bring them into the school. I think Toni was the only person there. We were just goofing around," I offered in hopes that this would appease their inquiring minds and assuage my discomfort. I had to get them to realize that I had no control over the situation, that I had no idea what I was doing.

My friends thought about what I said and I could see that the excuse made sense to them. As we eased into our chairs and settled down for the assembly I looked forward to the speakers so we could stop talking and I could reflect on this whole exchange that had just occurred.

Despite my look of complete concentration, I heard not a word of the assembly. I had to think about this whole deal. I didn't need to count the photos myself because I believed my friends' perceptions. Even if I did not want to see for myself, I would not dare get the pictures out then because I feared my friends would sense my own discomfort and confusion. I had to play it cool. I had to make it seem like this was no big deal. And yet I was plagued by one simple question: Why was it not okay for me to *want* that many photos of Toni? I did not have a concrete answer to that question other than my friends' responses sent the message that there was something odd about wanting, having, taking that many pictures of another girl, even if she was a friend. Will Toni react in a similar way? Will she think it was all innocent fun and games and not ask the questions? I dreaded sharing these photos with Toni.

Lunch period finally came around and I tried to busy myself by bouncing around the lunchroom talking to different tables and groups. This, however made me feel more awkward because I saw other people's pictures and I could compare them to my own. I was not concerned with how well their pictures came out. I focused on counting. I counted how many times certain people showed up in other people's photos. My worst fears were confirmed. Without exception the girls took more pictures of their boyfriends and boys in general, than of their girlfriends. Almost all of my pictures were of girls and among those, Toni was prominently represented. My mind continued to probe and reel. What did these pictures say about me?

Eventually Toni cornered me in the hallway and teased me about not showing her the pictures. I smiled and laughed along trying to make light of the situation. Not looking at her face I slowly drew the packet of pictures out of my notebook and handed them over. As she looked at the photos I noticed she read the backs of each one carefully. Uh-oh, this could be trouble. I had not thought about what I wrote on the photos. As she continued to look and read I tried hard to recall my comments I made on the pictures.

"What does TFF stand for," she inquired. She paused with a picture in hand and looked at me while I weighed the implications of my response in my mind.

"I think it stands for True Friends Forever. I saw it somewhere before," I answered trying very hard to maintain eye contact.

"Oh," she said and resumed looking at the pictures.

Anticipating the question about the many photos of her in the pile I offered up an excuse.

"Remember that day we were goofing around? I wanted to finish up my roll of film fast so I could develop it before school ended," I told her hoping she found my statement as plausible as I thought it ridiculous.

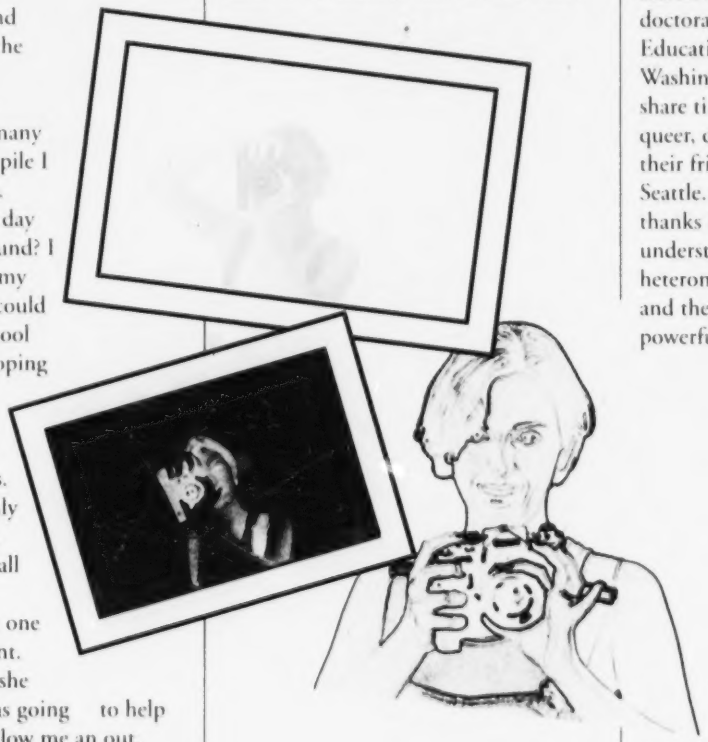
"Well, we certainly were being silly. You didn't have to waste all your film on me, though. Look at this one with me and the plant. What was I doing?" she offered back. She was going to help me play the game, allow me an out.

"Yeah, I thought that one was kind of weird," I lied. I actually thought that photo was a really cute one of her. I remember asking her to pose with a plant. She though it a strange request, but she complied. She laughed the whole time I was positioning her like those professional photographers who composed pictures for magazines. Her wonderful smile was so prominent in the picture, which is why I liked it.

"These are some really nice pictures. I like you, too, Remie. You're funny," she said as she handed them back to me.

We walked back to homeroom together and talked about our summer plans. The incriminating photos were snuggled safe in my notebook. It seemed that everything could return to normal. Someone had finally pressed the reset button.

For several days after the end of seventh grade, I contemplated the whole incident about the pictures. My crush on Toni clearly identified me with the boys, but I was definitely a girl. I realized that there was something very different about me, and yet I could not name it. However, I had learned that I needed to behave as a girl, even if this meant pretending and lying. I had to take into consideration how my actions were perceived by the people around me. As a result of my seventh grade experience I became much more aware of my actions. Whatever innocence I could have claimed before the pictures was now completely gone. I could not sit too close to another girl. I could not talk excessively about another girl. It would be years later before I willingly, and comfortably, gave another girl a hug. I could not give any hint that maybe I did have crushes on other girls. How I could live as a girl who desired other girls was beyond my understanding and imagination. Fulfilling others' expectations of me as a girl was my only option.



Remie L. Calalang is pursuing her doctorate in the Social Foundations of Education at the University of Washington. She writes, "Each week I share time with lesbian, bisexual, gay, queer, questioning, curious youth and their friends at Lambert House in Seattle. To them I owe a great deal of thanks for rekindling my passion for understanding the mechanisms of heteronormativity and homophobia, and the persons who fall victim to their powerful spells."

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Whose Voices are Heard?

Adolescent Mothering and an Ethic of Caring

BY JULIE K. BIDDLE

The voices of adolescent mothers are rarely heard by policy makers at any level: the local school, community, state, or nation. In fact, adolescent mothers' ordinary lives are seldom considered except for judgmental labeling. All this is especially disturbing when policies (i.e., Medicaid, welfare) affecting the lives of adolescent mothers and their children are presently being reformed by the federal and state governments.

In other work (Biddle, 1995), I describe adolescent mothers and their stories. By listening to the teens' voices as well as the multiple voices influencing their lives, I was able to suggest the significance of these stories for school and social systems' policy. My purpose was not to reach consensus regarding the complexity of adolescent parenting, or to resolve its dilemmas, but rather to pay attention to the everyday lives of teen mothers.

Reaching consensus about the teen parenting issue is not likely, nor is it essential, but it is important to heed the voices of these young women. To do this, I focus on some of the conflicts which arise in the social context of school as adolescents navigate life as mothers, examining the voices that emerge from the adolescent mothers' stories as well as the dissonant messages sent by the educational system.

The lens I bring to this work encompasses an ecological perspective, a constructivist approach, and a feminist theory that "shares the assumptions held generally by qualitative or interpretive researchers that interpretive human actions, whether found in women's reports of experience or in the cultural products of reports of experience . . . can be the focus of research."(Olesen, 1994, p. 158) Power issues surfaced time and time again, particularly as I observed the young mothers struggle between relying on and resisting against social policies that affect their everyday life. As Sara Ruddick (1989) states:

> With the birth of her first child a mother learns that her power in respect to her children is limited. As children grow and develop mothers find it increasingly more difficult to predict or control moods, tastes, ambitions, friendships, politics, or morality. Added to this unavoidable powerlessness is the fact and feeling of social impotence. Especially if the woman is a single mother. (p. 34)

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My study emerged from ordinariness and attempted to construct the meaning of everyday lives of teen mothers. Four teen mothers' lives were specifically highlighted in the 1995 study. In order to tell their stories, I spent concentrated time with each of the adolescent mothers over a two year period. Interviews were conducted during a pilot study (Biddle, 1994). Most of our interactions at that time occurred within the context of the public school nursery program where the teens' children attended. The following year I began my observations, home visits, shopping expeditions, visits to church services attended by one of the teen mothers, and had several informal conversations.

As I reflected on the individual mothers, I came to view them as possible representatives of the sphere of teen mothers. They certainly were representative of the more than fifty pregnant and parenting adolescents I met during my observations. There was diversity in race, age, marital status, number of children, level of schooling, exposure to the world of work, and familial support within the lives of the four mothers described herein. I recognize there are many adolescent mothers who are probably very different from the young women whose stories I tell here, but by coming to know these teen mothers, I believe I came closer to understanding adolescent motherhood in general. My conclusions were drawn by first uncovering the meanings of the adolescent mothers' stories, then looking at how the school systems' voices influenced the lives of the adolescent mothers, and finally examining the potential influences of

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the adolescent mothers' stories on policy making.

Inharmonious Voices and Mixed Messages

Ruddick (1989) comments, "Mothers have been a powerless group whose thinking, when it has been acknowledged at all, has most often been recognized by people interested in interpreting and controlling rather than listening." (p.26) Two messages emerged as I listened to adolescent mothers' voices. The first message dealt with leading 'interrupted lives.' Leading lives with interruptions is not unique to adolescent mothers; everyone deals with interruptions now and then in the course of a lifetime. However, for adolescent mothers, the interruptions seem to be more severe, more often, and more difficult to overcome. The second message echoed the human struggle between 'should dos and want to dos.' I specifically highlighted the voices of two teen mothers, Belinda and Lola in the opening paragraphs. The concluding paragraphs in this section illustrate the mixed messages heard from the school systems.

Interrupted Lives

> Being a mom is hard. I'm not used to it. It's hard. I'm not used to taking someone with me everywhere I go. I'm used to having my own room, but now her [daughter's] stuff is all over. She took over my drawers. I just don't have time for myself. (Biddle, 1995, p. 154)

Being a parent is hard; children do interrupt our lives. But adolescent mothers' lives are interrupted by more than just their children. Belinda was frustrated in her search for affordable housing. As a Children Services Board (CSB) client, she had to secure a new apartment before CSB would 'emancipate' her; that is, permit her to live independently. But CSB would not give her a definite emancipation date and that made looking for a new apartment difficult since Belinda could not sign any leases without knowing when she and her young children would be free to move. She felt as if her life was on hold, interrupted. At one point she cried out, "I can't do nothing about it." (Biddle, 1995, p. 156)

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Lola's life was interrupted periodically by her own running away. By 'basically just chilling' for an entire month, Lola's life was interrupted; her schooling, her children's child care, her tutoring, her home visits by CSB. She ran away from all social and educational systems. She'd had enough of people 'getting in her business.' She needed her space, her time, her own interruptions, not ones imposed by a system (e.g., visits from caseworkers and home management personnel).

Interruptions in the young mothers' lives were caused both by the systems and by the individual mothers. What was interesting to note was how the adolescent mothers handled the interruptions. Some dealt with their interruptions productively, but others seemed to create more confusion and chaos for their lives. For example, by not keeping appointments with CSB caseworkers, more suspicion was aroused about Lola's abilities to care for her children. The more times that caseworkers were unable to visit with Lola, the more likely it became that she would lose custody of her children. Lola usually knew the day and time for her caseworker's visits. She admitted to me that she often chose not to be home then; in fact, she was quite often at one of her neighbor's apartment and would see the caseworker come and go. In general, when the family support was present, success in dealing with interruptions was more likely to occur.

Struggle Between Should Do and Want To Do

Interest in doing things the 'right' way or at least in making the appearance of doing things in the 'right' way were evident in each of the adolescent mothers' stories. The struggle between what the mother should do (as a parent) and what they want to do (as a teenager) often created the dichotomy between 'should do' and 'want to do.' Ruddick (1989) points out that "social groups require that mothers shape their children's growth in 'acceptable' ways. What counts as acceptable varies enormously within and among groups and cultures." (p. 21)

Systems' personnel, particularly school system personnel, send explicit and implicit messages about this dilemma, that influence the adolescent mothers' definitions of right and wrong. The schools' voices often create more confusion than clarity as the adolescent mother attempts to resolve her conundrum. According to Ruddick (1989), a mother's group is "that set of people with whom she identifies to the degree that she would count failure to meet criteria of acceptability as her failure. The criteria of acceptability consist of the group values that a

mother has internalized as well as the values of group members whom she feels she must please." (p. 21) In many cases, the teen mother identifies the school as the group she has to please.

Lola often mentioned wanting to parent the right way. She struggled to maintain custody of her two children during my inquiry and eventually lost custody of them in June, 1995. She admitted that she was 'always yelling' at her children and that she didn't 'know how to talk to them like you do.' She even asked me if I would teach her how to talk with her children.

Because Lola did not have an adult who talked to her as a child (she grew up being yelled at, ordered about, and neglected by her own mother), it was difficult for her to imagine such a relationship with her own children; so my initial interactions with Lola were premised on her desire to interact positively with her children. We decided that during my visits we would be with her children. We would read books to them, play with blocks and other age appropriate toys with them, and go places like the local museums and parks. I thought that our visits would provide Lola with opportunities to both see positive interactions modeled and to practice positive parenting with her children. Unfortunately, during most of my visits, Lola often left the scene to entertain her friends.

On one visit to her home, I was left in the room with seven children. Some of Lola's friends had heard "a woman with books and blocks" was at Lola's place, so they brought their own children over to play! These teen parents, Lola included, left me with their children and went outside to smoke. While Lola occasionally exhibited fear of losing her children to CSB, she also admitted she'd like to "just give up and put her kids in foster care."

Lola also expressed concern about the children's abusive father, but continued to allow unsupervised visits to occur between them. She even intimated to me that since the children's father "loved having them so much" that maybe she'd just "let him have them, at least Christopher (her oldest child), because he's so bad."

During the months I spent with her, Lola consistently spent more time with her friends, putting their needs and wants ahead of her two children's. She admitted that she used to "give her one boyfriend money before she'd take care of the children's needs." Lola knew she should do things for her son and daughter, but she wanted to 'hang' with her friends. I continually observed Lola's 'want to do's' win the struggle over her 'should do's.'

Peer influence and the struggle 'to stop messin' with various people and substances presents the adolescent mother with a major dilemma. It is a struggle between being a teenager and being a parent. Winning or losing the struggle between should do (i.e., putting children first) and want to do (i.e., following friends) determines whether these young mothers do the 'right' things. While there is no doubt the mothers are externally influenced, the decision to do the right thing must be internally made by the individual.

Each of us deals with the dilemma of doing the right thing. What should I do? What do I want to do? These questions are not always oppositional. In fact, they are often the same. What I want to do is also what I should do. Some of the teen mothers felt this way. Belinda, for example, experienced the harmony that exists between these two questions. However, this ordinary human dilemma is often exacerbated for adolescent mothers. As pointed out in the developmental literature, teenagers usually lack the maturity to handle this particular dilemma with sophistication. (Elkind, 1978) After all, they are adolescents who must assume adult responsibilities and students who are unable to devote their full energies to school activities. While at school, these young women are free to be teenagers; they enjoy talking about boys, fashion, future career plans, teachers they dislike, homework, parties, and family relationships. When they leave school, they either go home or to a child care facility and assume the parental role. Coming to terms with this duality of roles is not easy.

Mixed Messages From the Schools

This duality of roles is further complicated by the mixed messages from the schools. For example, schools applaud conformity, not individuality. Schools rhetorically express valuing the individual, but in reality place the highest value on fitting in. Most students understand this and try to comply. But faced with contradictory information, adolescent mothers are caught and often stigmatized. Males (1993) suggests that the most important contribution schools can make to pregnancy deterrence and to healthier parenting is acceptance of pregnant girls, enabling them to continue their education without stigma. One teacher of a vocational class for teen mothers commented:

> The girls [pregnant or parenting girls] need to see themselves as different. We teach

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them to see themselves differently. When they don't see themselves differently, they have trouble. They still want to go out with their friends, you know and leave the baby with somebody else and not take the responsibility themselves. (Biddle,1995, p.148).

In the schools I observed, adolescent mothers are taught not to fit in the mainstream of the high school student body. They are taught to stand on the outside, or at least on the periphery of the school's population. As another teacher pointed out, 'When teens become mothers they have stepped into adult territory' and out of the 'fun' arena (e.g., attending the Friday night football game or the prom). At the same time teachers are encouraging teen mothers to see themselves differently, they are also telling them, 'Don't tell your other teachers that you have a baby because sometimes there's a stigma attached to it.' Some school personnel accused the teen mothers I knew of having 'special privileges' (e.g., leaving school early to take their children to the doctor or 'cutting' class to breast feed her baby). The same individuals also criticized the adolescent mothers of not assuming any parental responsibility. Such contradictions are confusing and exasperate the conflict rooted in power and powerlessness.

A Syndrome of Abuse and Adolescent Mothering

Embedded in the body of research conducted in the past decade about the meanings of women's contribution to the public life for women, my research specifically addresses the potential contribution of teen mothers' ordinary lives to public life/policy discourse. Most public policies are incongruent with ordinary life. My assertion is that new public policies must be more closely aligned to everyday situations if they are to make substantive differences. Harding, (1987) asserts:

> A different concern of feminist social research has been to examine women's contributions to activities in the public world which were already the focus of social science analysis. We now can see that women, too, have been the originators of distinctly human culture, deviants, voters, revolutionaries, social reformers, high achievers, wage workers, and so forth. Important studies have expanded our understanding of women's roles in public life both historically and in other cultures today.
>
> This focus still leaves some powerfully androcentric standards firmly in place, thereby insuring only partial and distorted analyses of gender and women's social activities. It falsely suggests that only those activities that men have found important to study are the ones which constitute and shape social life. This leads us to ignore such crucial issues as how changes in the social practices of reproduction, sexuality, and mothering have shaped the state. This research focus does not encourage us to ask what have been the meanings of women's contributions to public life for women. (p. 4-5)

Adolescent mothers are a marginalized group often pathogized by the middle-class, patriarchal culture because they do not conform to middle-class norms and values

As previously mentioned, adolescent mothers are not part of the policy making process. Therefore, it is incumbent upon our policy makers to become more attuned to the ordinary lives of those for whom they make the policies and procedures. Adolescent mothers are a marginalized group often pathogized by the middle-class, patriarchal culture because they do not conform to middle-class norms and values. Lacking a collective voice, these young mothers' stories are virtually unheard by those who most need to hear, namely policy makers and educators. Even if the adolescent mothers are empowered to speak, they usually lack a forum in which their voices can be heard. Schools offer a potential forum for the adolescent mothers' voice. But without becoming more responsive to their teen mothers, schools will continue to be characterized by a lack of compassion and a brutally deficient policy structure.

Abuse is an issue of power. In this case, I define abuse as an issue of a policy maker/educator's power over a powerless group of young mothers. The abusive life conditions that most adolescent mothers face reinforce my strong conviction that an ethic of caring is pivotal in turning around their life opportunities. As more individuals, especially those with policy making power, assume an ethic of caring toward adolescent mothers, a framework for knowing real persons and their particular context and community is established (see Noddings, 1984, for further discussion regarding an ethic of care).

Like other powerless groups, mothers (of all ages) make choices between violent and nonviolent strategies as they traverse their everyday lives. They often do not have weapons of power, such as guns, legal clout, money, or other tools with which to work one's will on others, but nonetheless, like the powerless everywhere, they are often enraged.

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(Ruddick, 1989) Routinely, adolescent mothers are enraged by policies and procedures that interrupt their lives or confuse them.

When a social/school policy structure is brutally deficient, the daily consequence is a society that casts off its children while perpetuating a double 'blaming the victim' abusive syndrome. Mothers are blamed for their inability to care for their children; children are blamed for their lack of care and are constituted as a new category, those 'at-risk.' The ideology of caring thus serves to promote mother-child attachment as a private and individual reality, while simultaneously legitimating a policy of detachment and non-responsiveness toward such private and individual realities. (Polakow, 1992, p.137) Such a syndrome of abuse as it relates to adolescent mothering must be arrested; it must move beyond rhetoric.

An Exploration into an Ethic of Caring

Rather than resting on the rhetoric of caring, let me conclude with an example of living out an ethic of caring. As mentioned earlier, intimacy developed between the teen mothers and me during the course of the inquiry and my relationship with Lola has continued to develop in the past few years. Much has happened. During our scheduled get-together in April, 1995, I knew Lola's situation was tenuous. It took ten minutes of my knocking on her door before anyone heard me over the music that was blasting and then it was a neighbor who came out of her apartment, opened Lola's door, and told me to go in. Inside I found Lola's boyfriend, a drug dealer, and his associates in the living room. The place reeked of marijuana. Lola was high and scantily clad. Her children were nowhere in sight. I honestly wanted to kidnap her, but instead foolishly asked, "Are you okay?" I don't recall exactly what Lola replied, but she indicated that she had forgotten I was coming and while she didn't ask me to leave, I knew that's what I had to do. After securing her promise that she'd call me, I did leave and promptly wept.

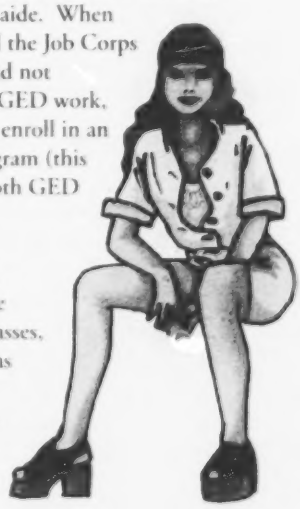
For the next six months our lives were disconnected. Lola dropped out of school, which meant our means of communication were cut off. Previously, she would call me from school since she did not have a phone at her apartment or I would call her GRADS teacher and leave a message for her. Without the school as a conduit, our communication had halted. I mailed notes to her home, but received no response. I learned later that my notes arrived when Lola was in the hospital and after she had been evicted from her apartment.

Between April and October, 1995 Lola dropped out of school; lost custody of her two children; lived in at least three different places; was hospitalized with injuries from a fight with another female; began drinking and smoking weed daily; and lost her job at a fast food place. Lola's self-efficacy was at an all-time low. She was ready to give up and would have if her 'Big Sister' had not intervened. Her authentic caring for Lola encouraged the despondent teen enough so that in late September, Lola enrolled in the local Job Corps program. At about the same time Lola was pulling the pieces of her disparate life together, I was frantic with worry.

To ease my concerns I called Children's Services. This call precipitated a month long series of phone conversations with various individuals. Lola's original caseworker had willingly handed her file over to a second caseworker while Lola was hospitalized. The new caseworker was hesitant to share anything with me without securing Lola's permission first (a fact that was encouraging to me). I merely asked that she tell Lola of my concern for her and to have Lola call me if she wanted to. So I waited. It took several weeks but finally Lola called and we met for dinner.

At the time of our reuniting (November, 1995) Lola was taking pre-GED classes at Job Corps and needed a tutor, a role I readily filled when asked to. We met weekly and sometimes twice a week to work on basic math, reading, and writing skills. We worked together for over a year and eventually she moved into her GED classes. In the course of that year I also testified at her CSB hearings about her progress. I witnessed her maturing self as both student and mother. Lola became more self-confident in her abilities to learn and to parent. She completed her nurse's training and secured a full-time job as a nurse's aide. When Lola completed the Job Corps program she had not completed her GED work, so I helped her enroll in an Even Start Program (this program has both GED and parenting components). Unfortunately, shortly after she started these classes, the program was terminated. However, Lola took the initiative to enroll herself

Mothers are blamed for their inability to care for their children; children are blamed for their lack of care and are constituted as a new category, those 'at-risk.'



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in an evening GED program that she could attend and still work full-time.

As the time neared for this young mother to regain custody of her children, she made another significant, independent decision. She enrolled in and paid for parenting classes. This meant she had to temporarily forego her work on a GED. As she told me in a phone conversation, "You know I just can't be doing everything." When we last talked, Lola commented that she couldn't believe she had "stuck with the parenting classes for this long and I ain't missed one." I wasn't surprised. Going to these classes was her idea. She sees a reason for them and she's learning relevant material for her life.

In the last several months I have witnesses this young women's growth in her ability to relate freely to others, me in particular. She has found direction in life because two people consistently cared for her. Lola's sense of belonging is reflected in a habit that she adopted shortly after I became her tutor. She began to introduce me to her friends as 'Mother.' Reflecting on this example of an ethic of caring reminded me of May Sarton's heroine, Lucy, as she mused "whether just this were not what you did take on if you chose to be a teacher . . . this, the care of souls." (p. 165)

Ordinary lives are not neat and clean. Like Lola's, they are often really messy! Educators and others in positions of authority must decide whether they will touch the ordinary lives of others or not. Each of us is positioned to either empower or marginalize others. The choice is made everyday. Will we care? Will we empower? If we do, we are changed and so are those around us!

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Julie K. Biddle, Ph.D., is director of the Dayton Satellite Center for Accelerated Schools. Her research interests focus on school renewal and at risk children and their families.

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Behind Classroom Doors: *A Reflection of My Struggle to Learn*

by Lora Liddell

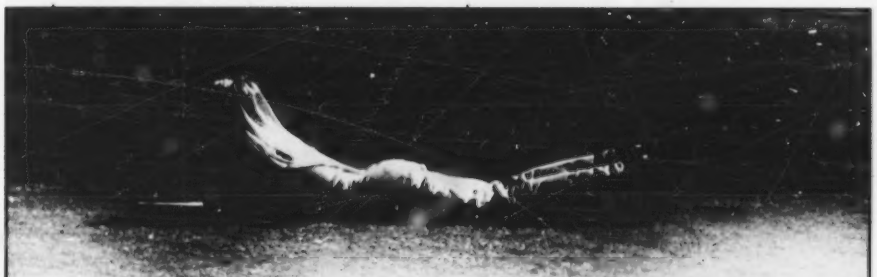
Throughout my educational career I have been faced with several obstacles, such as making good grades, keeping a positive attitude, and balancing school with my social activities. However, none of these challenges compared to my fear of the classroom itself. I was always an outgoing student. My teachers knew me as the girl who would always raise her hand eager to volunteer an answer, read aloud to the class, or demonstrate an experiment. I loved the attention I received from participating in class. I truly believed that I was always one of the smartest people in my class, if not the smartest, and my grades always reflected that belief. I was confident and in control of my academic career and I loved it. However, this positive feeling toward school only lasted throughout my elementary grades.

When I began middle school I became aware of boys and their place in my life. I knew that they liked beautiful girls with great personalities. I knew I was intelligent, but I began to question my appearance. Was I as pretty as my fellow female classmates? Was I skinny enough? Did my dark brown eyes and hair make me look dirtier than my blonde-haired blue-eyed counterparts? As puberty set in, I became increasingly more insecure. This insecurity began to affect my school work as it prevented me from taking advantage of the time I spent in class. I became so afraid of boys that I was afraid to volunteer answers in class for fear that one of my fellow classmates would make a smart remark or, if I got a question wrong, I was afraid someone would make fun of me. So, I began to withdraw into myself during class discussions. I would pray to God that my teachers would not call on me. I always tried to make myself look busy by writing down "pretend notes" so their eyes would not catch mine. When I did get asked to answer a question, my face would turn bright red, thus making my embarrassment known to everyone and drawing even more attention to myself. I dreaded going to school as it became a place I feared. No longer did I control my own education. I let my distrust of my classmates and fear of embarrassment control my life at school.

Was I as pretty as my fellow female classmates? Was I skinny enough?

High school was worse than middle school. With the establishment of popular and unpopular cliques, going to class became even more unbearable. Walking into classes filled with cheerleaders and athletes was sheer hell for me. They dominated the teachers and the room. They made fun of everyone and I lived in mortal fear that if I had to answer a question, they were going to laugh at me, too. My tenth grade geometry class epitomizes this picture. The majority of Mr. Steve's geometry class was composed of football players and cheerleaders. There were some not so cool "band nerds," and the rest of us

were just average people. From day one, the football players and cheerleaders dominated the class. They were always blurting out answers, goofing around, and harassing anyone and everyone. Because Mr. Steve was so laid back, he never stopped their disruptive behavior. I dreaded every second of those forty minutes I was required to be in that room. I never tried to answer a question when I was confused. I knew that if I got an answer wrong or made someone angry by asking a "stupid" question, I would be made fun of. As a result of my intimidation in this particular class, I received a "D" in geometry and still do not understand any of it.



My intimidation in school settings started with my own insecurities with myself. However, they were only compounded when other students began to take advantage of their social status by demeaning other students.

My intimidation in school settings started with my own insecurities with myself. However, they were only compounded when other students began to take advantage of their social status by demeaning other students. When teachers did not try to stop this behavior, I began to feel threatened in the very environment that was developed for me.

Due to my own experiences in school, I am able to relate to the experiences described by Peggy Orenstein in her book, *SchoolGirls*. The stories of the girls in this book reminded me of my own struggles throughout my life. I knew girls who had eating disorders and I, too, tried to separate myself from that world just as the girls that Orenstein describes at Weston did. And just like them, I was constantly aware of my reputation and I would not do anything that might risk it. I did whatever I could to survive my days at school. My education became less important as maintaining my dignity and reputation became the primary focus of my life.

The experiences of many girls in our schools demonstrate the limitations that low self-esteem, male dominance, poverty, violence, and drug use place on girls' education today. Parental influence, as well as teacher negligence, impacts girls' performance in school as well. Girls are not receiving the quality education they deserve because their needs in the classroom are not being met. They are increasingly intimidated by their male counterparts dominating classroom discussions and their teacher's time and attention. This results in girls not learning. If teachers today recognize the issues and environment that girls face in schools, they can begin to correct the problems. Respect in the classroom is the first step. Girls and boys could interact freely without fear of embarrassment or ridicule. In addition, teachers need to recognize the symptoms of low self-esteem. Warning signs such as eating disorders, self-mutilation, and other problems need to be discussed in classes extensively so girls are aware of the health risks they may be taking. Furthermore, teachers need to be sensitive to the challenges girls face outside of the classroom. These challenges may occur in the hallways and cafeteria, or be the problems of poverty, drugs and violence of the outside world. However, if teachers are aware of their existence and how they impact girls, they can take steps to address these issues.

Girls' education is what empowers them, and if they are not receiving quality education, or education that is commensurate to that of boys, then they will not be able to thrive as adults. Girls, their families, and their teachers need to reform today's schools to make them more gender and culturally equal so that girls (and boys) can learn in the best environment possible.

Lora Liddell is completing her senior year at Ohio University as an education major in a teacher preparation partnership program entitled, "Creating Active and Reflective Educators for Democratic Education" (C.A.R.E.) She hopes to begin teaching in an urban school district this fall in either Atlanta, GA or Pittsburgh, PA.

Adolescence, Schooling and Equality in

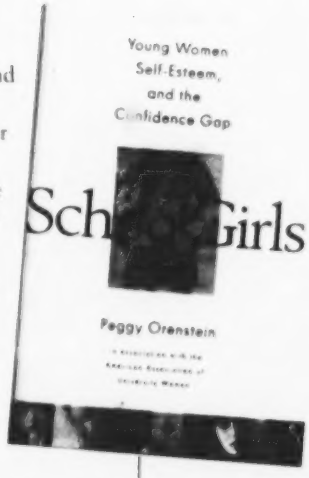
SchoolGirls

BY **NANCY SMITH**

A Review of:
Orenstein, Peggy. 1994. *SchoolGirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*. New York: Doubleday.

". . . boys perceive equality as a loss" commented a middle school teacher from a northern California middle school to Peggy Orenstein, a journalist who spent a year observing and interacting with students, parents, teachers, counselors and administrators. She reports this statement in her book *SchoolGirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap*, and further concludes, "Apparently, girls are uneasy with it, too." (p.255) Serious implications for educating in a democratic society emerge from a thoughtful consideration of the information and observations that Orenstein makes about the effects of gender inequity in schools on the lives of youth. Her focus is on the relationship between the lack of equality in schools — microcosms of our society — and girls' self concepts, academic success, social choices and relationships. While girls may be the focal point, Orenstein clearly understands that educational equity for girls must include boys and the implications for them.

You may remember an article in your local paper in the early nineties about a study conducted by researchers at the American Association of University Women on the relationship between adolescent girls' self esteem and academic achievement entitled, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*. Orenstein read one of those articles and her response was, "I felt my stomach sink." (p. xv) As a feminist and a journalist, she wanted to find out more and to observe what happened in school for girls. In cooperation with the AAUW and two middle schools, one with primarily white and middle class students and the other with primarily students of color with working class status, she returned to eighth grade to tell the story of some of the girls she observed. She attended classes, ate lunch with them, visited their homes and got to know their friends. While Orenstein makes no claim to be a researcher, her project meets many of the requirements of ethnography and her writing is so enjoyable to read that it becomes an example of the value of narrative storytelling as a means of reporting educational research.



Part I
Weston Middle School

Do you know an Amy, a bold, brassy and strong-willed white girl who seems 'to shrink into herself' displaying 'typical feminine pose' in the classroom? Have you met a Becca, a family caretaker with an eating disorder? Or Evie, daughter of professional parents who is looking for approval and may say 'yes' to Bradley's insistence on sex, while still unaware of her own desire? Have you seen Lisa, an overweight girl who finally finds a sense of belonging among the 'losers,' the kids into drugs and other self-defeating choices? And finally, have you heard of Jeanie who, with the good intentions of her principal, attempts to respond to sexual harassment only to have it backfire on both of them? Although these succinct descriptions may sound like caricatures of girls, Orenstein helps the reader come to know their complexities, the subtleties of their experiences and the contexts in which they are being educated. The result makes them, the research on young women, and the cost of inequality, believable.

What does the reader learn through Amy, Becca, Evie, and Jeanie as Orenstein compares their stories to the findings of numerous studies on gender and education, especially with middle school students? A strength of the book is the way in which Orenstein uses the girls' words to illustrate. For example, consider the paradox in these remarks by Amy after math class.

The before-class confident, critical thinker: "They told me to tell you that they want me to be my own person. My mother told me to tell you that. I do want to be my own person, but it's like you're interviewing me about who I am and she's telling me what to say — that's not my own person, is it?" (p. 6) And the after-class approval seeker: "When the bell rings, I ask Amy about the mistake she made in class and the embarrassment it caused her. She blushes again. 'Oh yeah,' she says.

'That's about the only time I ever talked in there. I'll never do that again.'" (p. 11) One is left to ponder what Amy has learned from the hidden curriculum that so powerfully alters her thinking?

Throughout the book, Orenstein blends in brief summaries of research findings that have demonstrated differences in teacher interactions between boys and girls such as boys dominating classroom discussions; using calling out behaviors to keep the teacher's attention; teachers asking boys more thinking questions; giving them more academic and critical feedback on work, etc. From this differential treatment, boys learn they have power, their opinions count, and they can take risks and they can get what they want, in this case the most valuable commodity in the classroom: the teacher's time. Of course, Orenstein says, "Boys . . . may be learning an unfortunate self-centeredness along with a lack of respect for their female classmates." (p. 14) Amy's comments show what the girls learn, silencing themselves.

"I think," says Amy slowly, "I think girls just worry about what people will say more than boys do, so they don't want to talk so much."

I mention to Amy that the boys freely volunteer in the math and science classes I've observed, even though their answers are often wrong. They seem to think it's okay to say 'I think,' to be unsure of a response.

Amy nods in agreement. "Boys never care if they're wrong. They can say totally off-the-wall things, things that have nothing to do with the class sometimes. They're not afraid to get in trouble or anything. I'm not shy. But it's like, when I get into class, I just . . ." She shrugs her shoulders helplessly. "I just can't talk. I don't know why." (p. 12)

Orenstein connects these incidences with the long term consequences of girls' performance in math and science classes. Citing the AAUW study, she states, "girls and boys who like math and science have higher levels of self esteem than other children." The problem for girls is that they don't retain their interest or ability in math and science. Orenstein points out, "It's important to note that the confidence drop often *precedes* the competence drop." (p. 18) Throughout the book are examples of well-meaning teachers failing to address girls' learning needs. Instead, what Orenstein observed in math and science classes were teachers who let the girls' passive responses go unquestioned. The teachers who did take steps to alter the classroom interaction patterns could expect resistance from the boys. One teacher who announced to her classes she was going to call on girls and boys equally and used her class rosters to do it, had the following experience:

> After two days the boys blew up," she told me one afternoon during a break between classes. "They started complaining and saying that I was calling on the girls more than them. I showed them it wasn't true and they had to back down. I kept on doing it, but for the boys, equality was hard to get used to; they perceived it as a big loss." (p. 27)

Drawing on Becca's, Evie's, and Jeanie's experiences and self revelations, Orenstein writes the next chapters to illustrate white adolescent girls' struggles with body image and sexuality. In these chapters, she reveals the difficulty in the double bind tightrope walk between being a schoolgirl and a slut and the dysfunctional relationship too many girls have with food while attempting to do this balancing act. According to Orenstein, "At Weston, girls may be 'sluts', but boys are 'players.' Girls are 'whores'; boys are 'studs'. Sex 'ruins' girls; it enhances boys." (p. 57) These chapters of Orenstein's book may be controversial in some schools if the book is read by students even though much of what she describes is in the words of the girls themselves. Orenstein anticipates controversy by discussing directly some of the suggestions made by researchers that "Sexual entitlement — a sense of autonomy over one's body and desires — is an essential component of a healthy adult self." (p. 56) Certainly, women's control over their bodies is fraught with social, political, religious, historical, and contemporary influences. Indeed, entire industries capitalize on objectifying women's bodies. It is no wonder that the girls Orenstein describes see themselves as objects of desire rather than developing desire themselves as healthy adult selves. To see girls otherwise would be threatening to many in this society.

I was disappointed that Orenstein does not include any discussion relative to homosexuality in the parts of the book in which she addresses sexuality. She remarks in the Introduction that no girls were willing to express their sexual feelings toward other girls. I wonder if that would be the only source for this topic. She reports on class discussions, posters in classrooms, books being read and a wide range of her own observations. Is it possible that during a school year in two middle schools that there were no incidents or evidence of any kind related to lesbianism or discrimination in the form of name-calling? None of the students had or

knew of students who had homosexual siblings or parents? Could she have asked questions to facilitate student comments as she did for other topics? Could she have followed up with students who might have expressed opinions? Would the AAUW or publisher have balked at the inclusion of the topic of same sex relationships? Her explanation for omission of this topic was dissatisfying.

Nearly as controversial and clearly as sensitive a topic, is the definition of sexual harassment in schools and the creation and enforcement of sexual harassment policies. A boy who had grabbed Jeanie's breasts acted like he did not understand the charges against him, in other words, that he did not understand what sexual harassment is. Listen to the conflicting message his response demonstrates: "All the guys do that stuff, it's no big deal. The girls don't mind. I mean, they don't do anything about it. I'd beat the crap out of someone if they touched me like that. But girls are different, they don't really do anything, so I guess it's okay to do." (p. 129) Knowing he would not allow that treatment toward himself seems like it would be evidence enough that it is inappropriate behavior. This boy and others with similar offenses get away with obvious sexual harassment in a context that 'blames the victim' and teaches boys and girls not to respect girls' bodies.

Part II
Audubon Middle School

Just as the AAUW study reported differences in self esteem among white, black and Latina girls, Orenstein finds differences in the effects of gender inequalities for students in a white middle class school and a more culturally diverse school in a lower socioeconomic setting. Audubon Middle School is clean and violence is not commonplace, but a majority of the students (90% African-American, Latino, Asian, or Filipino) at Audubon live in poverty. The interaction among racism, classism and sexism apparent in the lives of these young people leaves its indelible mark. The mark in their lives, as stated by Orenstein, is that these children learn "that their minds and their potential are not worth as much as others." (p. 136) As a result, according to the author, "issues of gender are often subsumed by issues of basic humanity, often secondary to enabling a student — any student — to go through a school day without feeling insulted, abused, or wronged by her peers or by her teachers." (p. 137) Devaluation by gender is, nevertheless, evident at Audubon, and for the most part, unacknowledged and/or unaddressed.

The tendency, for example, is to dismiss gender related issues such as sexual harassment due to the problems with poverty. While I find Orenstein's insights and interpretations throughout the book about the meaning of gender issues both sound and compelling, in the early pages of this section, she missed an opportunity to clarify the relationships among race, class and gender in a system of thought which privileges some over others.

Disagreement on this topic is considerable, but as I see it, primacy among oppressions is not the point. Dismissing one form of oppression in the name of other forms is a failure to see how differential valuing of humans based on any characteristics perpetuates undemocratic ideals. The resulting distancing of race and/or class from gender fails to challenge the inequalities inherent in the dominant culture. Orenstein finds plenty of evidence of the insidious nature of inequality by gender in the lives of Liza, LaRhonda, April, Marta and Dashelle.

Liza is a victim of sexual harassment which nearly evolves into rape. The issue escalates from harassment toward rape, according to Liza, because school authorities are not concerned with students' rights. Many incidents observed and reported by Orenstein bear this out. The lack of respect for some people fosters lack of respect for all, whether they be students, teachers, administrators or parents. As LaRhonda's story demonstrates, one of the only ways to get respect is to fight back or to opt out. She makes what might be understandable choices to 'get respect' in a society that devalues both her blackness and her womanhood.

April has been retained in school. In reviewing the results of the studies on retention, Orenstein questions the wisdom of retention for girls like April.

For girls more than boys, grade retention is directly linked to dropping out. Just as high-achieving girls personalize small mistakes, low-achieving girls internalize their failures, viewing retention as a ruling on their own ineptitude; although girls and boys who are held back drop out at twice the rate of their peers, the girls drop out earlier, and more frequently relate their decision to their retention. (p. 178)

April's school experiences also illustrate other findings from research on black girls:

■ They initiate more contacts with teachers than white or Latina girls but are more frequently rebuffed.

■ Black girls are more likely to be praised for their social maturity than their academic progress.

■ Black girls may have to endure social isolation to achieve academic success. (p. 180-181)

The culture of Audubon includes frequent references to girls who "fall through the cracks." (p. 199) These girls are represented by Marta Herrera, a Latina girl struggling with whether to join a gang and in doing so, to submit to sexual requests. Orenstein observes that while the white girls of Weston may be taught to repress their sexuality, Marta gets reduced only to her sexuality. Her independence is extremely limited due to the potential risk of pregnancy. Her attention becomes focused on having a guy "because guys protect you from other guys." (p. 209) She doesn't have an answer when asked who protects her from the protector.

My favorite story, the hopeful story, the inspiring story is Dashelle's. Although all indications are that she is heading in the wrong direction, she evokes an astute observation from a younger sibling who says: "You ain't gonna be nothin." (p. 229) Fearing the example she is setting for her ten siblings, Dashelle is shocked into action. Drawing on the strength that comes from this allegiance to family, she becomes aggressive in her pursuit of academic achievement. Her success is acclaimed at the end of eighth grade. Will she make it in the long haul? One wonders.

Part III
Through the Looking Glass

Part III is shorter than the first two parts and is a relief to read after immersion in the documentation Orenstein provides of the experiences girls have in many of our schools. Orenstein lifts the reader out of the mire of gender inequality through the telling of what she observed in another middle school in San Francisco in the classroom of a dedicated teacher with twenty-six years experience. Judith Logan teaches a culturally and racially diverse and gifted group of sixth graders. Her educational philosophy is captured in the quote of Maria Mitchell found hanging in her classroom:

> In my younger days when I was pained by the half-educated, loose and inaccurate ways that we [women] had, I used to say, 'How much women need exact science.' But since I have known some workers in science who were not always true to the teachings of nature, who have loved self more than science, I have now said, 'How much science needs women.' " (p 272)

According to Orenstein's description, Logan is truly a master teacher. Not only has she created a curriculum "that includes us all," (p. 257) she models excellent pedagogy that seems to reflect an inclusive and constructivist approach. She makes no apologies for teaching a 'woman's unit' explaining to the students that "women's studies is not about 'ruling over,' it is about 'existing with." (p.259) She assigns history monologues that require all students, both male and female, to dramatize both a female and male historical figure. She has a class discussion on sexual harassment after reading a short story by Jamaica Kincaid entitled *Girl*. Students make a quilt of notable women. Not only does she design such units, she talks with her students about gender whenever it arises in the course of their day. To imagine a gender fair classroom, an inclusive curriculum, and a teacher who represents the best of the profession, read Part III.

Gain, Not Loss

If you, the reader, are white, middle class and female as I am, reading Part I of this book may be similar to Orenstein's experience in researching and writing it. Orenstein reflects on confronting her own conflicts when she "saw how these vibrant young women were beginning to suppress themselves." (p. xxvii) She says she "realized how thoroughly I, too, had learned the lessons of silence, how I had come to censor my own ideas and doubt the efficacy of my actions," (p. xxvii) this despite having been a school leader with good grades who went to college, landed a prestigious job and succeeded. If, however, you are a person of color and/or grew up in a lower socioeconomic context, Part II may speak more directly to your experience. Regardless of the extent to which one identifies with the particular girls and boys and their schools, I would be astonished if any reader could not feel empathy, concern, and anger about the conditions Orenstein reports. The demeaning and dehumanizing gender culture she describes ought to be unthinkable in a democratic society whose men and women seek to be decent, caring and responsible citizens — human beings.

Inclusion of the report on Judith Logan's teaching and the learning of both her male and female students is promise that boys can realize the gain in sharing the planet with equals and girls can comfortably see themselves as equals. A small band of radical citizens with this vision led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and Frederick Douglass met 150 years ago in Seneca Falls, New York, and moved us closer to democracy when they wrote the 'Declaration of Sentiments' giving voice to the vision that all men *and* women are created equal. It's time our schools taught equality. Reading this book will help us understand why and how.

Nancy Smith is a professor of Educational Foundations and Women's Studies at Millersvania University. She is the coordinator of the graduate degree in Leadership for Teaching and Learning, as well as a founder of Full Circle Susquehanna, which holds a summer camp for adolescent girls.

books

'A GROUND FROM WHICH TO SOAR:' *Exploring Olsen's Silences for Educators of Girls and Women*

BY JANET MACLENNAN

A review of: Tillie Olsen. 1978. *Silences.* New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing.

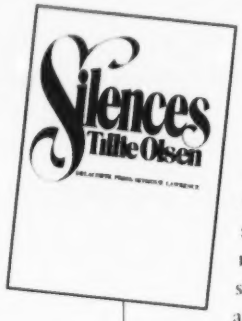
Before we can speak to our female students about finding a voice, fashioning a voice, we must first speak of silences. And not just speak of silences, but delve into them, suffocate in their many layers and nuances until we are able to breathe air and light and understanding into their depths. If this is our goal as educators of girls and women, then Tillie Olsen, in her book *Silences* (1978; New York: Delta), is our help. This review explores the dimensions of silence in growth and creativity whereof Tillie Olsen speaks.

A walk on the artistic side. I was excited to read literature for this journal's book review, excited that it was even suggested as valuable. As a researcher, I consider myself first and foremost a writer: the writing must be good to communicate to the reader. To absorb the beautiful words of Tillie Olsen was soothing. But reading literature is also tied to the use of narrative in qualitative research. Not that qualitative research is fiction, made up to satisfy and entertain the reader, but there is a story in the silences, and in the telling of the tales of people's lives. There is power in the telling, and in a story. Hear what Tillie Olsen says:

> These are not natural silences, that necessary time for renewal, lying fallow, gestation, in the natural cycle of creation. The silences I speak of here are unnatural; the unnatural thwarting of what struggles to come into being, but cannot.

These are not natural silences, that necessary time for renewal, lying fallow, gestation, in the natural cycle of creation. The silences I speak of here are unnatural; the unnatural thwarting of what struggles to come into being, but cannot.

TILLIE OLSEN



Silence is a beautiful lived metaphor. I know it will come up in my own research and teaching, as it has for so many before me.

Olsen continues, "This book is about such silences. It is concerned with the relationship of circumstances — including class, color, sex; the times, climate into which one is born — to the creation of literature." So Olsen sets about examining the role of silence in the creative process, and the circumstances which can lead to silence and to a stifling of that creative process. "Kin to these years-long silences are the *hidden* silences; work aborted, deferred, denied — hidden by the work which does not come to fruition." (p. 8)

The idea of hidden silences. Is that one thing we teachers of girls and women need to explore? Among feminists, not just the silencing, but the silences, hidden, visible, and shadowed. I need to play more with the idea of silences. Silencing comes from another. But not always. There can be a lived silence, a silence by choice, because of the external threat of silencing. There can be a silence of the unknown, where a person lives quiet and noiseless within where potential and possibility could speak, but do not. Can that kind of silence be a choice, too? A choice not to look within, not to call forth that voice? What is the responsibility of a teacher to speak of, to speak to such silences as they may dwell within women and girls, to critically explore and even to pry into the choices we make not only to speak, but also to be silent?

There is also the kind of silence in which one speaks, but what is said falls on deaf ears. I cannot ignore the role of audience in the creative process, in work, in love, in life.

> 'Your subconscious needed that time to grow the layers of pearl,' she was told. Perhaps, perhaps, but I doubt it. Subterranean forces can make you wait, but they are very finicky about the kind of waiting it has to be. Before they will feed the creator back, they must be fed, what needs to be worked on. (p. 13)

This is the silence in which what is needed (not necessarily always asked for) is denied. This is cruel and violent

silence, yet it can be at times startlingly subtle when it is lived inside. Olsen explores this silence all through her essay on Rebecca Harding.

> Wholly surrendered and dedicated lives; time as needed for the work; totality of self. But women are traditionally trained to place others' needs first, to feel these needs as their own; their sphere, their satisfaction to be making it possible for others to use their abilities. (p.17)

This is the silence of voice. The act of voice is the self made social. So without a voice is the female self left to drift painfully on the margins?

In the first parts of the book, I admire how Olsen weaves her stories with others as she explores silences and the creative process. She is 'making it up' (Ruddick, 1989) because she is telling a powerful story in an intricate way. "And for the comparative handful of women born into the privileged class; being, not doing; man does, woman is; to you the world says work, to us it says seem." (p. 26) In this passage, the world is talking to women. What it says is harmful. Still other times, the world says nothing to women. That is silence. It is a stingy and hurtful silence.

Olsen describes yet another kind of silence: "For twentieth century women: roles, discontinuities, part-self, part-time; conflict; composed 'guilt,' 'a man can give full energy to his profession, a woman cannot." (p. 27) A wonderful, telling term. When a woman is divided, she is part-self. When she lives constant and knotting tensions and contradictions, she is part-self. When she serves others always before herself, she is part-self. When she is not permitted full access to the well of energy within her, she is part-self.

> Sparse indeed is the literature on the way of denial to small girl children of the development of their endowment as born human: active, vigorous bodies; exercise of the power to do, to make, to investigate, to invent, to conquer obstacles, to resist violations of the self; to think, create, choose; to attain community, confidence in self. Little has been written on the harms of instilling constant concern with appearance; the need to please, to support; the training in acceptance, deferring. (p. 27)

Although today there is more literature on this, there is not yet enough. Certainly not enough to stop this 'way of denial.' Never enough. What I want to explore is the way to the surface from this way of denial. And the learned wisdom of those who have not yet surfaced. Surfacing.

Olsen powerfully pronounces: "we will never have the body of work that we are capable of producing." (p. 38) Such a short sentence says so much. We will never have that. What a slap in the face! If we will never have that, what can we do about it? Why don't we just give up now?

"Not to have audience is a kind of death." (p. 44) Another short sentence that says so much. I spoke of this kind of silence as violent. Many feminists do not have an audience for their thinking, their work. When they do have an audience, this audience can be unresponsive, critical, mocking.

No one in literature had opposed the prevalent "American right to rise . . . A man may make himself anything he chooses" with Rebecca Harding's living question: "What are rights without means?" (p.49)

What indeed!? A silence of holding out, of non-telling, and the story that women/feminists cry for is not told. This is a living question, as Olsen terms it. Living, but dead without an audience willing to hear it.

"How good it must be to be a man when you want to travel." (p. 75)

> *Imagination must have freedom, velocity — and a ground from which to soar.*
>
> – Tillie Olsen

Do women ever share these similar sentiments about the privilege afforded the male body and male presence, even today? And is it a longing to have what men have? Or a longing to have been allowed/to be allowed to have the same for themselves, or to have what they *need* for themselves? There is a difference.

Olsen includes a mystical section entitled 'If,' in which she writes:

> If the acknowledged great in achievement, possessing inner confirmation of their achievement; sometimes the stout retainer of habituated productivity and/or outside recognition as well, can be silenced—what, inescapably, does this bespeak of the power of circumstance? What does it explain to the rest of us of possible causes — outside ourselves — of our founderings, failures, unnatural silencings? (p. 141)

It explains that everything must be a connected individual to social constructions and social experiencing. To flow between the two is communication — limited, limiting, language, potentizializing, audience, voice, silence, silencing.

Vision must have a place from which (as well as territory) to observe.

> Imagination must have freedom, velocity — and a ground from which to soar. (p. 247)

Perhaps this is the gift that we as educators are compelled to give our girls.

Janet MacLennan, a native of Nova Scotia, Canada, is pursuing her doctorate in the School of Interpersonal Communications at Ohio University.

References

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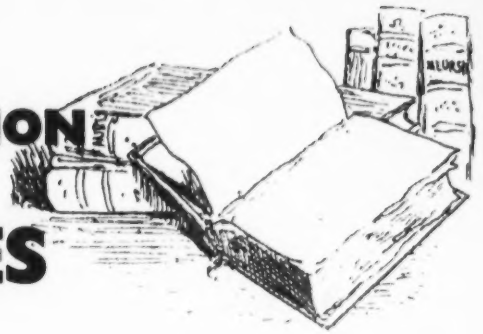
GENDER EDUCATION RESOURCES



To guide your further inquiry into the topic of gender and education, the following provides a partial list of resources for parents, educators, and students.
Our thanks to Ms. Peggy Feury who worked to compile most of the information on this list.

GENERAL GENDER ISSUES

American Association of University Women.. 1992. ***How Schools Shortchange Girls.*** Washington, DC: AAUW Educational Foundation Research Dept.

American Association of University Women. 1991. ***Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America.*** Washington, DC: AAUW Educational Foundation Research Dept.

Bauermeister, E. & Smith, H. (1997). ***Let's Hear It For The Girls***. New York: Penguin Books.

Belenky, Mary, et al. 1986. ***Women's Ways of Knowing***. New York: Basic Books.

Brown, Lyn and Carol Gilligan, 1992. ***Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girl's Development***. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

A study of girls at the Laurel School, tracing the increasing loss of assertiveness as girls reach adolescence.

Brumberg, Joan.. 1997. ***The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls***. New York: Random.

Discusses the historical development of many issues faced by girls today.

Bassoff, Evelyn. ***Cherishing Our Daughters: How to Raise a Healthy, Confident Daughter***. Dutton.

Chapman, Anne, ed. 1986. ***Feminist Resources for Schools and Colleges: A Guide to Curricular Materials***. New York: Feminist Press.

Detailed annotations of bibliographies, reference works, and periodicals. Section on interdisciplinary approaches.***Daughters Newsletter***. This periodical can be ordered by calling 800-829-1088, or by writing 1808 Ashwood Ave., Nashville, TN 37212.

de Beauvoir, Simon. 1952/1989. ***The Second Sex.*** New York: Knopf.

A classic seminal work in early feminist writing.

Finders, Margaret. 1997. ***Just Girls: Hidden Literacies and Life in Junior High.*** New York: Teachers College Press.

Forsyth, Sondra and the Ms. Foundation. ***Girls Seen and Heard: 52 Lessons for our Daughters***. Putnam

These lessons for boosting self-esteem are meant to be shared between mother and daughter.

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. 1979. ***The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination***. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Gilligan, Carol. 1982. ***In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development***. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

A study of girls moral development in contrast to Kohlberg's study of boys. In this study girls are seen to have different concerns — they are more cooperative and sharing, rather than seeking justice and universal principles.

Gilligan, Carol, Nona P. Lyons, and Trudy J. Hanmer, eds. 1990. ***Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School***. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Girls' voices are brought into the study of adolescence and questions about the meaning of self, relationship, and morality. The books shows that girls at puberty are in danger of being silenced — losing their voices and losing connection with others.

Hall, Roberta, and Bernice Sandler. 1982. ***The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women***? Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges.

Project on the status and education of women with statistics and anecdotes demonstrating the disadvantages for women in the classroom with suggestions for warming the climate.

Larrick, N. (1965). "The All White World of Children's Books." ***Saturday Review***, 11 Sept. 63-65.

Lauter, Paul, ed. 1983. ***Reconstructing American Literature: Courses, Syllabi, Issues***. New York: Feminist Press.

A collection of syllabi for college courses that could easily be adapted for high school use.

Lott, Bernice. 1987. ***Women's Lives: Themes and Variations in Gender Learning***. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

An examination of how gender is learned. The first five chapters deal with childhood through adolescence.

Maggio, Rosalie. 1988. ***The Nonsexist Word Finder Dictionary of Gender-Free Usage***. Boston: Beacon Press.

Set up like a dictionary, but with entertaining epigraphs at the beginning of each new letter. Valuable appendices dealing with problems that occur when one tries to use nonsexist language. "Solving the Great Pronoun Problem: 14 Ways to Avoid the Sexist Singular" is one of the best!

Marone, Nicky. 1998. ***How to Mother a Successful Daughter: A Practical Guide to Empowering Girls From Birth to Eighteen.*** New York: Harmony.

Discusses what mothers can do "to counteract the many cultural messages that belittle girls."

Martin, Jane Roland. 1994. ***Changing the Educational Landscape***. New York: Routledge.

A theoretical exploration of how women and girls have been systematicallly left out of the curriculum and education.

Martin, Jane Roland. 1992. ***The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for cChanging Families.*** Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

A model of what a school might look like that responds to the changing world and introduces the "Three C's" of Care, Concern, and Connection.

National Council of Teachers of English. ***"Guidelines for a Gender-Balanced Curriculum in English, Grades 7-12."***

This pamphlet suggests how a teacher can create a gender-balanced curriculum and includes a list of selections. The pamphlet is free and may be copied without permission. Ask for #19654 from NCTE, Order Dept., 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Neumann, Anna and Penelope Peterson. 1997. ***Women, Research, and Autobiography in Education***. New York: Teachers College Press.

Olsen, Tillie. 1965. ***Silences***. New York: Bantam Doubleday.

Sadker, David and Myrna Sadker. 1984. ***Failing at Fairness***. New York: Simon and Schuster.

A look into how the classroom experience is vastly, although sometimes subtely, different for girls than boys.

Scott, K., and C. Schau. 1985. "Sex Equity and Sex Bias in Instructional Materials." In S. Klein, ed., ***Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity through Education***. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

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Silvey, A. (1995). "A Fire Bell in the Night." ***Horn Book Magazine***. 712,116-117.

Spender, Dale. 1980. ***Man-Made Language***. London: Pandora.

Much of women's historical oppression has been structured through patriarchal language.

Stone, Lynda. 1914. ***The Education Feminist Reader***. New York: Routledge.

Whaley, Liz and Liz Dodge. 1993. ***Weaving in the Women: Transforming the High School English Curriculum***. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Woolf, Virginia.

Especially for Teens

Finding our Way: The Teen Girls' Survival Guide (HarperCollins) by Allison Abner and Linda Villarosa. Though geared toward all girls between the ages of 13-18, the authors, both of whom are African Americans, emphasize issues faced by young women of color.

33 Things Every Girls Should Know: Stories, Poems, & Smart Talk by 33 Extraordinary Women (Crown) by Tonya Bolden. Bits of wisdom from writers, artists, and playwrights such as Lynda Barry, Sandra Cisneros, Faith Ringgold and Wendy Wasserstein.

The Girls' Guide to Life: How to Take Charge of the Issues that Affect You (Little Brown) by Catherine Dee. This handbook on feminist issues was called by Booklist, "a jumble of poetry, advice, information, and first-person experience."

Sugar in the Raw: Voices of Young Black Girls in America (Random House) by Rebecca Carroll. "Carroll has created an important, pathbreaking book," said Ms. Magazine, "by daring to explore territory that has been largely ignored not only by white feminists who study girlhood, but also by black activists. . ."

Girls Speak Out: Finding Your True Self (Scholastic) by Andrea Johnston. From a nationwide series of girls' personal-growth workshops.

Reviving Ophelia. 1994 by Mary Pipher, New York: Putnam..

SchoolGirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap (Anchor) by Peggy Orenstein. A journalistic look into two middle schools and how girls are impacted by education. Includes teaching experiences of Judy Logan that are gender-sensitive.

Organizations

The National Organization of Women (NOW)
www.now.org/

The Ms. Foundation 1-800-676-7780,
www.ins.foundation.org/

American Association of University Women
1-800-326AAUW www.aauw.org/

Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA)
Resource Center 1-800-225-3088, www.edu.org/womensequity/index.html, email - weeactr@edc.org

Adolescent/Young Adult Literature

As noted by educator Judy Logan, we have girls read about the lives of boys and men so often that it seems natural and when we ask boys to read about girls and women, it often feels out of the ordinary or biased. We will achieve some modicum of gender-sensitivity when it no longer seems unusual or met with any resistance to read books such as the following, simply as wonderful, thought-provoking literature. - JH

Cisneros, Sandra. 1994. ***The House on Mango Street.*** New York: Random House.

Danticat, Edwidge. 1994. ***Breath, Eyes, Memory.*** New York: Soho.

Guy-Sheftall, Beverly, ed. ***Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought***. The New Press.

Gibbons, Kaye. ***Ellen Foster***. 1990. New York: Vintage Books.

Hoffman, Eva. ***Lost in Translation***. 1989. New York: Penguin.

hooks, bell. ***Bone Black***. 1996. New York: Henry Holt.

Kaysen, Susanna. ***Girl, Interrupted***. 1993. New York: Vintage.

Kingsolver, Barbara. 1998. ***Bean Trees***. New York: Harper & Row.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. 1975. ***The Woman Warrior***. New York: Vintage Books.

Kogawa, Joy. ***Obasan***. 1981. New York: Anchor Books.

Lorde, Audre. 1982. ***Zami: A New Spelling of My Name***. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Mori, Kyoko. 1995. ***The Dream of Water***. New York: Henry Holt.

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Morrison, Toni. 1987. ***Beloved***. Chicago: HomeVision.

Shange, Ntozake. 1985. ***Betsey Brown***. New York: Picador.

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Sapphire/Ramona Lofton. ***Push***. 1996. New York: Vintage.

Children's Literature

Bunting, E. & DeGroat, D. 1994. ***Sunshine Home.*** New York: Clarion.

Cannon, J. 1993. ***Stellaluna.*** New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

de' Saint Exuprey, A. 1943. ***The Little Prince***. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

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Lionni, L. (1994). ***An Extraordinary Egg***. New York: Knopf, Inc.

Lyon, G.E., & Catalanotto, P. 1994. ***Mama Is A Miner***. New York: Orchard Books.

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Pinkney, G.J. & Pinkney, J. 1992. ***Back Home.*** New York: Dial Books.

Phelps, Ethell Johnson. 1981. ***The Maid of the North: Feminist Folktales from Around the World***. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rael, E.O. & Priceman, M. 1996. ***What Zeesie Saw on Delancey Street***. New York: Simon & Schuster Books.

Say, A. 1996. ***Emma's Rug***. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Shange, N. & Sporn, M. 1997. ***White Wash***. New York: Walker and Co.

Simon, J. 1991. ***Dear Mr. Blueberry***. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books.

Slyder, I. 1996. ***The Fabulous Flying Fandinis***. New York: Cobblehill Books.

VanAllsburg, C. 1992. ***The Widow's Broom***. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co.

Wells, R. 1973. ***Benjamin and Tulip***. New York: Dial Books.

Zelinsky, P. & Isaacs, A. ***Swamp Angel***. New York: Dutton Children's Books.

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Jaylynne N. Hutchinson, Director
Phone: (740) 593-9827
E-mail: hutchinj@ohiou.edu

Democracy & Education
Jean Ann Hunt, Editor
National Louis University
Wheeling Campus
1000 Capitol Drive
Wheeling, IL 60090
Phone: 1-800-443-5522, ext. 5253
E-mail: jhun@wheeling1.nl.edu

CANADA

Calgary
Hans Smits
Faculty of Education
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive
Calgary, Alberta
CANADA T2N 1N4
Phone: (403) 220-237-4058
E-mail: hsmits@ucalgary.ca

Ontario - Oakville
Bruce Lofquist
1326 Bronte Road
Oakville, Ontario
CANADA L6J 4Z3
Phone: (416) 684-1371

UNITED STATES

California - Los Angeles
Cynthia McDermott
California State University - Dominquez Hills
School of Education
1000 East Victoria
Carson, CA 90747
Phone: (310) 243-3920
E-mail: cmcdermott@csudh.edu

California - Southern
Tom Wilson
Chapman University
3334 North Glassel
Orange, CA 92666
Phone: (714) 725-2053
E-mail: twilson1@home.com

Colorado
Julie Ash
16 Crystal Circle
Carbondale, CO 81623
Phone: (970) 963-4591
email: jash@sopris.net

Illinois - Chicago
Bill Ayers
1040 West Harrison M/C 147
Chicago, IL 60607-7133
Phone: (312) 996-9689
E-mail: bayers@uic.edu

Iowa
Roger Johanson
Coe College
1220 First Avenue NE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
Phone: (319) 399-8510
E-mail: rjohanso@coe.edu

Indiana - Central
Terry O'Connor
Indiana State University
Center for Teaching and Learning
Dreiser Hall, R. 127
Terre Haute, IN 47809
Phone: (812) 237-3053
E-mail: ctlocon@ruby.indstate.edu

Maryland
Kevin Lavey
814 Cathedral Street #3-rear
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: (410) 752-4708

Michigan - South Central
Diane Brunner
Michigan State University
Department of English
215 Morrill
East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: (517) 355-1629
E-mail: brunner@pilot.msu.edu

Missouri
Sunny Pervil
Maryville University, Division of Education
13550 Conway Road
St. Louis, MO 63144
Phone: (314) 993-3832
E-mail: pervil@maryville.edu

Nebraska
Steve Swidler
118 Henzlik Hall
Center for Curriculum & Instruction
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588-0355
Phone: (402) 472-0040
Fax: (402) 472-8317
E-mail: sswidler@unlinfo.unl.edu

New Mexico
Jaime Grinberg
University of New Mexico
College of Education
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1231
Phone: (505) 277-4166
E-mail: grinberg@UNM.edu

New York City
Mark Statman
459 Fifth Street, New York, NY 11215
Phone: (718) 768-5484
or at: Eugene Lang College
New School for Social Research
65 West 11th Street, New York, NY 10011
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North Carolina - Western
Lisa Bloom
211 Killian
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723
Phone: (828) 227-7310
E-mail: bloom@wcu.edu

Ohio - Central
Rikki Santer
2102 Kentwell Road
Columbus, OH 43221
Phone: (614) 442-5608
E-mail: MRoss43610@aol.com

Ohio - Northern
Thomas Kelly
John Carroll University
Department of Education
University Heights, OH 44118
Work phone: (216) 397-4696
Home phone: (216) 751-0157
E-mail: tkelly@jcu.edu

Ohio - Southeastern
Kari Weaver & Joette Weber
c/o McCracken Hall
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701
(740) 593-4531
E-mail: ac081@seorf.ohiou.edu

Ohio - Southwestern
Suellyn Henke
350 McGuffey Hall
Oxford, OH 45056
Phone: (513) 523-0458
E-mail: HENKESM@muohio.edu

Oklahoma
Mary John O'Hair
Center for School Renewal
& Democratic Citizenship
Department of Educational Leadership
& Policy Studies
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK 73019-0260
Phone: (405) 325-1267
Fax: (405) 325-2403
E-mail: mjohair@ou.edu

Washington - Seattle
Ed Mikel
Antioch University
2326-6th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121-1814
Phone: (206) 441-5352, ext. 5617
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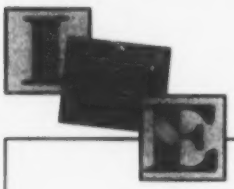

Call for Manuscripts

Race, Democracy and Education in the Classroom

The Institute for Democracy in Education is currently seeking manuscripts for the summer 1999 issue of its journal *Democracy & Education*. We are looking for authors who have explored the dynamics of race in classrooms, schools, and community settings, and who may have explored the following questions, for example:

- How does the inclusion of racial issues and dynamics facilitate a healthier, more democratic learning community?
- How can teachers address issues of race and social justice through classroom practices and subject matter?
- What are the challenges that face teachers and administrators who work in a school where they are in the racial minority?
- How do racial issues impact working relationships between administrators and teachers and parents?
- How do you teach about race in the following settings: all Euro-American classrooms, multiracial classrooms, predominately African-American classrooms, predominately Latino classrooms, etc.....?
- What are some ways in which we can assist our students in understanding the interplay between race, gender, and socioeconomic status?

Send three double-spaced copies of your article for review to:
Professor David A. Stone, Guest Editor
Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling & Special Education
Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115
(815)753-4621 email: dstone@niu.edu

Look forward to our Fall 1999 issue on **"Safe Schools"**
Submission details to be announced later.

Write for **Democracy & Education**

Democracy & Education would like you to write for upcoming issues. Tentative themes are given above, but please don't feel limited. We occasionally produce an unthemed issue just to reflect all the good manuscripts we receive. We'd like to hear from you about your successes and joyful failures, classroom projects and activities, reviews of useful materials, or discussions of issues concerning democratic classroom practice.

Please submit two double-spaced copies of each article. If you provide the article on disk, include hard copies; preferred software is WordPerfect or Microsoft Word. Include references at the end of the text, and **include total word count.** Editorial guidelines available on request.

Guidelines for Manuscripts

Essays — Articles which demonstrate the theme of the issue in detail. Six to fifteen pages.

Teacher Files — Short pieces explaining a particular activity, unit, etc., used by a teacher in the classroom and related to the theme of the issue. Two to six pages.

Reflections — Brief thoughts and impressions of the world and democracy as they relate to teaching. Two to six pages.

Reviews — Examinations or evaluations of books, videos or other material related to the theme of the issue. Review should focus on the material's relevance to teachers. Three to six pages.

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